

Chapter One

Introduction

by

Iyi Ochiagha

History has it that every race or people have a root, it has become important for us to trace our own root. The first man on earth had his root traced to the Garden of Eden between Rivers Euphrates and Tigris in present day Iraq. In the Bible, the root of Abraham the father of multitude was traced to Ur of Chaldeans in Iraq. Moses, the leader of the Jews traced their root to the land of Canaan after four hundred years of slavery in Egypt. Alex Haley, the author of a book called 'Roots' and a forth generation of Kunta Kinte in America, traced his root to northern Guinea, a country in West-Africa. Even Adolphus Hitler claimed that the Germans came from a special race called Aryan.

Recently, Prof. O. Alaezi traced the root of all Igbo to Israel. There are some shocking revelations in his work called 'Ibo Exodus, Revealed! These revelations are not mere stories but realities that will tempt every Igbo to believe that he is a Hebrew. Some of those convincing evidences according to him are inscriptions in ancient Hebrew language in the Palace of Eze Eri in Agulueri, Anambra State. These inscriptions have been there long before the coming of the white colonial masters.

There was also an archeological British finding at Agulu, 500 feet below the soil, of 'The Star of King David in Bronze". The British colonial masters decided to engrave it in the old West African coin, penny and half a penny.

Lastly, the word "Eri", from where Agulueri and Umuleri were derived was the name of the fifth son of Gad, and Gad the seventh son of Jacob (Genesis 46:16).

No wonder when an Igboman wants to express that something has happened in the far distant past; he will say 'Mgbe Eri' or 'Eri mgbe', meaning since the time of Eri. An Akuman will say 'Eshite mgbe'. Some other Igbo will say 'Erite mgbe'. In this case 'Eri' as a noun is changed into

an adverb of time; for the word 'erite or eshite means 'since'. Whether eshite mgbe or erite mgbe, they still mean 'since the time of Eri'.

This is almost like the word 'Ifite'. In the central part of Igboland like Anambra, we have communities like Ifite Ogwari, Ifite Ukpo, Ora Ifite, Ezi na Ifite etcetera. In the southern part like Imo and Abia, it is called Ihite. There we have Ihite Ama-afo in Umuahia, Ezi na Ihite in Mbaise, Ihite Uboma in Okigwe zone and others. In northern Igbo like Ezeagu, Aku, Ohebe Dim, and other communities, it is called Ibite. We have Ibite Olo in Ezeagu, Aka Ibite in Aku and Ohebe Dim. According to Professor Alaezi the name Ifite/Ihite/Ibite originated from the Middle East and common in Igboland.

Apart from oral history handed down from generation to generation that Umuezike Aku came from the royal family of the Attah Dynasty in Idah, a town in Igala land, there are other shocking revelations to this belief. For example, there is a recitation of the genealogy of Umuezike and Ezike Attah's exploits of his environment and society by Umuada Umuezike that particularly challenged us into carrying out this research.

This book, 'Our Root' has covered many areas of life in Umuezike: the history, culture, politics, Education, personalities and so on. It was not intended to detest, slight or attack any village, person or group of persons, outside or inside Aku, living or dead. We tried as much as possible to sift all information received to avoid errors. We were able to achieve this by getting information from more than just a few people on every issue. Send to us your observations and comments. We shall happily receive them. These will help us in the next edition.

Our aim in this book is to bring out undistorted history of our people, Umuezike and even beyond. Umuezike as the name suggests, means the children of Ezike. Ezike was a prince and the son of one of the Attahs of Igala. Igala is a tribe very close to the confluence of Rivers Niger and Benue in present Kogi state of Nigeria. Ezike Attah trekked all the way from Idah (the royal home of Attah) to Aku, a town in Igbo land.

He came clutching the ark of his god, Ejiri and a giant bell (Oti) in his hands. He successfully passed several communities without being harmed or killed either because of his god or his bravery in the art of war as an Igalaman. Moreover the princes of the Attahs were leaders or commanders of wars during the Igala empire expansion. That might be the reason he was called

“Ezike”, meaning powerful king. He passed through Adoru, Okutu, Okpuje, Nrobu, and Obimo and finally settled at Ugwu Ujere (Ujere Hill) northern part of Umuezike.

Ezike Attah Igala later went into pacts and treaties with the earlier settlers at the present location called Aku.

A Legendary

True to that spirit of territorial expansion inherent in Igala blood, Ezike Attah cut a twine (ogburugbu) from its root at Ishi Ejiri, very close to the place where Amidi Ohemuje is presently located. Eight days later, the twine withered down the length and width of the present day Umuezike, Ofienyi and Mgboko communities, covering the whole of Uzagba and Adada basin. So he claimed all these vast areas of land. He planted also the ark of his god, Ejiri on that spot. That area is known as Ishi Ejiri.

Leadership

It is of great interest that Umuezike has all the years been in the fore front of Aku leadership and oratory. These qualities for example were seen in the persons of Enyivuek’ Oti, Chief Ugwu Ishihe and Agu Diarua. Enyivuek’ Oti, Ezukwuoke Ozota coupled with his aged mother and some few other elders intervened in the shooting of Aku people by the white colonial soldiers during the Agbarigba war of 1911. They went to Enu Nwankwo at Ngodongo Umuezike to meet the soldiers when they were on break after the first shooting bout. As they were about to start a second round these elders approached them; waving young palm fronds in the air as a sign of suing for peace. The soldiers were touched when they saw Ezukwuoke Ozota carrying his aged mother on his back and the woman waving also a young palm frond. That was how the killing of Aku people stopped.

Agu Diarua had many times taken unilateral decisions for the benefit of the entire Aku people without any objection from any quarter. He was called the “mouthpiece of the people”. They inherited these traits from their common ancestor, Erim who was said to be an orator and a leader. He was even addressed as “Erim na-eri Aku nile”.

In the area of philosophy and wisdom, Nnadi Ogo Nwugwu excelled more than his contemporaries that he became an authority and a reference point. Several sayings and proverbs used in Aku today were invented by him. Some of his proverbs are:

1. “Oha nkerede na-aku idudu nhe ha ha”. This literally means that a small community gathers according to its number. The proverb advises us to always do things in line with our abilities. It is another way of saying ‘cut your coat according to your size’.
2. “Nnadi-Ogo Nwugwu bu nwanne onye anog”. Meaning that he (Nnadi Ogo Nwugwu) does not judge a case based on what he hears from the accuser until he has listened to the accused.
3. Onye ozo anagi ahu oru di na eshi nwunye onye ozo. No outsider sees the weaknesses in another man’s wife.
4. Ana akpara onye onu mkpu gahere ani nna nya. A person who finds it difficult to open up easily falls into trouble even when he has people around to help.

There are several other proverbs made by Nnadi Ogo Nwugwu but for space I could not continue.

Chapter Two

Antiphon sung by Umuada Umuezike and Brief History of Umuezike.

by

Iyi Ochiagha

Igbo

English

Oo-----a-a! Oo----a-a!
Oo-----a-a! Oo----a-a

Yes—oo! Yes----oo!
Yes---oo! Yes---oo!

Umuezike Attah!
Umuezike Attah

Children of Ezike Attah!
Children of Ezike Attah

Igara aya Attah!
Igara aya Attah

Igala people, the warriors of Attah
Igala people, the warriors of Attah

Okwo echi aya Attah!
Okwo echi aya Attah

The Attah god of war!
The Attah god of war

Anyi epieru ogbeje o!
Anyi epieru ogbeje eze

We have entered a palace!
We have entered the king's palace

Anyi epieru ogbeje o!
Anyi epieru ogbeje eze

We have entered a palace!
We have entered the king's palace

Ogbeje eze yiri eze!
Ogbeje eze yiri eze

The king's palace is like the king!
The king's palace is like the king

Eze yiri Attah Igara!
Eze yiri Attah Igara

The kingship is in the order of Attah!
The kingship is in the order of Attah

Umuezike Attah!
Umuezike Attah

The children of Ezike Attah!
The children of Ezike Attah

Nd' luara alua were eze!

Migrants who took the kingship!

Nd' luara alua were eze	Migrants who took the kingship
Anyi biara abia were eze!	We came and took the throne!
Anyi biara abia were eze	We came and took the throne
Umuezike Attah!	The children of Ezike Attah!
Umuezike Attah	The children of Ezike Attah
Igara aya Attah!	Igala people the warriors of Attah!
Igara aya Attah	Igala people the warriors of Attah
Ojobara eze achiri eze!	The most fitted has taken the crown!
Ojobara eze achiri eze	The most fitted has taken the crown
Ojobara eze achiri eze!	The most eligible has taken up the throne!
Ojobara eze achiri eze	The most eligible has taken up the throne
Imenye bu umu njichara ekwu!	People are wretched!
Imenye bu umu njichara ekwu	People are wretched
Anyi nwug'da ayog'da ha o!	They are happy when we are dying!
Anyi nwug'da ayog'da ha o	They are happy when we are dying
Anyi yog'da akwag'da ha o!	They become sad because we are happy!
Anyi yog'da akwag'da ha o	They become sad because we are happy
Mmanwu Ayogu Ori!	Ayogu Ori's masquerade!
Mmanwu Ayogu Ori	Ayogu Ori's masquerade
Mmanwu anyi yiri anyi!	Our masquerade resembles us!
Mmanwu anyi yiri anyi	Our masquerade resembles us
Mmanwu madu d' ke maa!	Human masquerade that look like spirit!
Mmanwu madu d' ke maa	Human masquerade that look like spirit

The whole history of Umuezike is almost summed up in the above entrance hymn heralding the coming of Ezike Attah into the Igboland. It talks about his

exploits and those of his descendants in Igboland. It condemns the attitudes of people (imenye) who choose to be sadists. The song describes them as wretched ones (imenye bu umu njichara ekwu) who jubilate over our sorrows and become cold spirited because of our success. All these happen because God has crowned us as the rightful kings (O jobara eze achiri eze). It talks about how Umuezike have joyfully entered the King's Palace (anyi epier' Ogbeje Eze). It says that the King's Palace is just like the King (Ogbeje Eze yiri Eze). And in fact, their kingship is in the order of Attah of Igala (Eze yiri Attah Igara). The song goes on to call on Igala people, the warriors of Attah (Igara aya Attah). It also calls on Attah's god of war (okwo echi aya Attah). It addresses Umuezike as the children of Attah (Umuezike Attah). It praises Umuezike as a people who become kings in a foreign land (ndi biara abia were eze).

It was composed and sung by Umuada Umuezike generally, but more frequently by Umuada Uwani-Otobo. They usually sing it during festivities and also used as a funeral dirge in respect to a deceased kinsman. The song was more interesting in those days when any of these great daughters of Umuezike like Oriji Nnadi, Veronica Ekwom, Ogbunodu Nwebem or Ogbuanya Ishihe led it.

There are usually some follow-up like:

'Oru na Igbo ejigi oba nan' Attah,
Oru na Igbo ejigi oba nan' Attah,
Ka anyi jeme Igara ka anyi lata Ezike,
Ka anyi mara ihe o ga-abu naka n'Ezike'

Kelere m Umu-Ezike Attah-----Greet the children of Ezike Attah for me,

Ndi awa nodudu-----The people of wo nodudu,

Ndi awa lukoro-----The people of wo lukolo.

Wo nodudu, wo lukolo' are greetings in Igala language meant for morning and work respectively. Here the umuada try to remember the greetings in their ancestral language.

Then they will end it by praying for Attah still in Igala language, 'Attah, Ojo kidenyi' (correctly pronounced as Attah, Ojo kidide we) meaning, God protect Attah.

Brief History of Umuezike

Umuezike is a large community made up of five hamlets namely: Uwani-Otobo, Umuobara, Amadiefioha, Uwenu Ezike Orogwo and Amankpo in order of seniority. Umuezike means the children of Ezike-----usually called Umuezike Attah Igala. Ezike was either the son of the Attah of Igala of that period or from that dynasty. There are some possible reasons he left his royal home and inheritance to migrate to Igboland.

First, he might be a warrior as his name suggests and that spirit of exploration made him to migrate, leaving his homeland to pitch tent in the midst of the Igbo people. This could be before or around 8th and 9th century A.D. He came from the royal home of Attah dynasty in Idah. According to Dr Tom Miachi (Introducing the Igala people 2006, 50th anniversary of Attah Obaje), 'the remoteness of Attah institution has not been properly determined historically but oral tradition and archeological records point to dates around the 8th and 9th century A.D. The possible influence of the Igala kingship on Nri and Igbo Ukwu cultures has also been dated to about 8th and 9th century A.D'.

Then if Igala monarch influenced Nri and Igbo Ukwu as early as that period, it could be suggested that Ezike Attah might have utilized that opportunity of Igala's influence on Igbo to find his way into Aku before or about the same period suggested by Dr Miachi. Therefore Ezike Attah as a warrior, might probably not interested in the throne that he would occupy when the father was no more. It might have been earlier than 8th or 9th centuries. For the Igala influence would have affected Aku which is at the northern part of Igbo bordering with Igala before Nri and Igbo Ukwu in the interior Igboland.

Second, there might have been a persecution that arose against him after the death of his father. He was to be the next king but his younger brother usurped the throne just like what happened in England in 1272; when Prince Edward was dropped and his younger brother, King George the sixth took up the throne. Prince Edward was sent on exile. It might have happened in the other way round. Ezike Attah might be the younger or the youngest and had wanted to be the next king after the father. When he failed to be elected he left in anger to establish his own habitation.

He carried along the ark of his god, Ejiri (okwo echi aya Attah) to protect him on his way to an unknown place and other paraphernalia which made him to conquer every obstacle on his way.

There was also Ogwu Attah, the father of Nkpologwu who came from Idah. His descendants are recognized as the people of Ogwu Attah, hence Nkpologwu (Nkpuru Ogwu). Ezike and Ogwu were suspected to be from the same lineage. Their descendants have continued to show the relationship till today. In those days before the construction of Aku-Nkpologwu-Adani road, Umuezike people used to weed the only path linking Aku and Nkpologwu from Aku through Adada-ukwu to Ishi Nkpologwu. At the end of the day they would be received by Nkpologwu with sumptuous meal. This was celebrated annually usually in the heart of rainy season.

The name 'Ezike', is it Igala or Igbo name? Is it a common name for both tribes? If it is a common name, does it mean the same thing to Igala and Igbo? In fact, there are some Igbo sayings which have always paired Igala with Igbo as brothers, 'Oru na Igbo', which means Igala and Igbo. 'Ezike' is therefore a common name borne by both tribes and means the same thing. Ezike is a corruption of a Hebrew name, Hezekiah. Both Igala and Igbo are descendants of Eri, the fifth son of Gad, who was the seventh son of Jacob' (Alaezi 2002, Ibo Exodus Revealed).

I do not agree. Ezike is not a corruption of Hezekiah. It is solely an Igbo name. It is a name given to a man of great influence. 'Eze' means king and "ike" means power. So Ezike means powerful king. Ezike was not the original name of Ezike Attah. He adopted it when he migrated to Igboland because of his exploits and influence on the people. He was like father Abraham in taking advantage of his environment. The name 'Ezike' later dominated his Igala name. It was the same way Ojiyi was given the name 'Ezike' when he came to Aku. Ojiyi was not only an herbalist but a man of great political influence. I have made several trips to different parts of Igala during this research to find out whether 'Ezike' is an Igala name. The answer I got was 'no'. It was not even an ancient name in Igalaland.

Igala people may not have the same descent with Igbo people. According to the Attah of Igala, Agabaidu Aliyu Obaje, Igala came from Southern Yamen, passed through Ethiopia where there is an ethnic group called the Gala and finally to the present location. The simple logic here is that the Igala people and Igbo people have been good neighbours. Inter ethnic marriage has been a regular feature. Even one of the Attahs was believed to be born of Igbo-----
--'Igbo gave birth to Okoliko and Okoliko the son of Onuche' is a common saying in Igala.

Names

The Igala and Igbo peoples have some common names based on their closeness in terms of Geographical location. They are:

1. Aku-----city gate (onuofu) in Igala. Igalamen answer it as name even till today. It means wealth or flying termites in Igbo. Some parts of Igala call it Ekwu with a dot under E. This means door which is near in meaning to gate.
2. Agabaidu-----lion in Igala. It is often used as praise to some people in Igboland. Aku people answer Agaba. There is Agaba family in Mgboko, Aku.
3. Ogwu-----twin in Igala, example Ogwu Attah the father of Nkpologwu.
4. Ogwu-----war in Igala, pronounced as Ogu in Igbo and means the same thing. 'Ogwu' here does not mean thorn as people may be tempted to think.
5. Ajogwu-----warrior in Igala, and also an Igbo name copied from Igala. It does not mean bad thorn. There was Ajogwu Anugwu in Uwani-Otobo. Ajogwu is a name still very common in Uzo-Uwani.
6. Ejiri-----it is either an obselete or corrupted word in Igala. It is suggested to be a personal god to Ezike Attah.
7. Diewa-----corrupted or obselete. The only word/s sounding like it in Igala is unfortunately a statement though it could still be formed into a name-----'di we wa', meaning bring your own. Or he could be from other neighbouring tribes who served as war mercenaries. He ruled Aku from the mid seventeenth century (L.O. Ocho, 1974).
8. Onodi-----pronounced as Onoji in Igala, meaning Attah's eunuchs who acted as his security guards. It is an Igbo name copied from Igala commonly answered in Aku. There are Onodi families in Mgboko.
9. Edoga-----a special greeting meant for a highly placed person in the society or a king. It is an Igala word but serves as a name in Aku. No special meaning in Aku except the one in Igala. There are Edoga families in Mgboko, Ohemuje and other villages in Aku.
10. Okakwu-----meaning hippopotamus in Igala. It is also used as a title. It is an Aku name copied from Igala. Okakwu family exists in Amadiefioha, Umuezike.

Other names answered in Aku but suspected to have originated from Igala are: Agbowu, Odeke, Okide and Awed', example Agbowu and Odeke are

found in Mgboko and Amankpo. Okide and Awed' are names in Ohemuje. Isiorji Awed' is from Amaezike Ohemuje.

MIGRATION

It is good to note that the entire Umuezike clan has a common ancestor in the person of Ezike Attah. There was no sign or existence of aborigines or later immigrants in all the areas occupied by Umuezike people. But there are cases of emigrants. For example, Ekaboyi from Umuobara emigrated to Mgboko and founded a part of Umudimotfue. Uwani-Otobo Oshegu Nkporogwu and Uwani-Otobo Ugbene Ajima are extractions of Uwani-Otobo Aku. There are other towns in Igboland that have Umuezike villages. Examples are Ohodo, Eke and others.

No doubt, there might be cases of intra migration within Umuezike. By this I mean there were possibilities of some small family groups migrating and merging with other larger families within Umuezike. The larger families received them affably, sharing land and other things in common. This is in accordance with our adage, 'ala nile bu ala Attah', meaning all lands belong to Attah. In this book, we have no intention of delving into that matter as every piece of land belongs to Ezike Attah. Ezike Attah is the owner of the land occupied by the entire people of Umuezike and so one can choose to find habitation any where within Umuezike.

For example, a larger population of Amadiefioha occupies one third of the land belonging to Uwani-Otobo. Uwani-Otobo has never asked them to leave or pay for the land. The whole farmland at Izere, between Okporoko Ejiri and Ngodongo is being cultivated by Amankpo while it belongs to Uwani-Otobo. Some parts of Umuagana are living inside Umuodugwu and Umuezikoro Erim lands. Some Umuodugwu people are occupying some pieces of land owned by Umuezikoro Erim and so on; still with the usual belief that all land belongs to Attah. This means that Umuezike do not discriminate. They see vanity in all aspect of human crave for gains. It is summed up in a popular adage, "Umuezike na-ata nri anyinya". In other words Umuezike people are lighthearted.

Uwenu Ezike Orogwo sings it in her egwu Odo song: 'ihe enweg' ishi', meaning vanity of life. The expression of this characteristic will be seen in the body of this book where Nwodo Nwezeamagu alias "Egbe na-etichu ogu", showed an example of how to forgive. It is unfortunate that our

neighbours whom many of them believe in maximum gain of the earthly things see this light-heartedness in us as a weakness.

DISPLAY OF ARISTOCRATIC PRIDE OF UMUEZIKE CLAN

Another remarkable thing in the history and life of Umuezike people is the “Atu-Nwattah myth”. She is a mythical princess of Ezike Attah. Every female child born of any family in Umuezike is regarded by the rest of Aku as a princess and therefore golden. She is treated and revered as so. That is why when a particular article in the market suddenly becomes expensive people will promptly ask whether it is “Atu Nwattah”. This means, has it become golden as Ezike Attah daughter?

There is an air of superiority which is peculiar to Amankpo people. They believe they have achieved a lot in life and therefore should carry themselves high. They do not think any other people should do so. They therefore express this through Uroko-Otobo Odo masquerade music, ‘I na-eje nkunku ishidu Amankpo’. It means, why do you carry yourself high as if you are from Amankpo?

Amankpo strongly think that they are the kings as expressed in their, ‘egwu odo’:

‘Aa-ee Igede-Eze alaa n’ama akuru eze,
Aa-ee Igede-Eze’ (Chorus)

This means that their Igede Eze okikpe odo masquerade has gone to the land where kingship is planted.

Amankpo believe that they can produce food in abundance, so they express it in a song, “E jee m Ikwu Oka Elechi nke nri bu eja”. Meaning, I prefer to reside in Amankpo where food is in surplus. It has become the dream of every spinster in Aku to be married to an Amankpo man or alternatively any man from other hamlets in Umuezike. This has probably contributed to her enormous population. Amankpo is the most populated hamlet in Aku (1991 Nigeria Census).

Amankpo is the only hamlet in Aku whose Odo masquerade makes music in the evening of Ori day in defiance to the tradition of Odo masquerade practice in Aku. They go on to boast of it through Uroko Otobo Odo music: ‘Uroko Otobo akpogda egwu orie Aku je-eme gunu’

This means that their Uroko Otobo Odo masquerade has decided to make music on Ori day contrary to the tradition, what will Aku people do?

Amankpo again is the only hamlet in Aku which has two communities: one at Aku in Igbo-Etiti Local Government Area and the other bordering with Nimbo in Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area.

Generally Umuezike is a people known for philosophical sayings through their egwu ode songs. Amadiefioha for example sings:

'Gworo gworo gworo

O gwo

Gworo gworo gworo

O gwo'.

This means that there is a general anarchy in our society. And true to their words we are in a state of confusion and lawlessness. This corresponds to W.B. Yeats' poem, 'The Second Coming' as reflected in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*:

Turning and turning in the widening gyre

The falcon cannot hear the falconer;

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;

Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.

They repeated that it has been as they have earlier said thus:

'Nd' o bu-o

Nod'be nd' anyi kwure'

This means that things have continued to worsen in fulfillment of that prophesy.

Again in reflection of King Solomon's proverbs Uwenu Ezike Orogwo sings that the world is vanity (ihe enweg' ishi). They added that people should accept their destiny as they have done. But it surprises them that people reject theirs, hence criminality becoming the order of the day. Thus:

Aloke Ugwuoke ewer' nke chi enye

Me imenye na-aju nke chi he.

Was Ezike Attah actually a descendant of Attah?

Many people in Aku and Igala answer Attah after the Attah of Igala. Attah is regarded and treated as the father of all Igala people. So any person can choose to answer the name or adopt it as surname. This was not the case with Ezike Attah. He came at the time when Attah's fame and influence on the lives of Igbo people were growing. He could be the son of any of the Attahs of the distant past. According to Dr Tom Miachi, the following names had

occupied the Attah throne around the 8th and 9th centuries: Agenepoje, Abutu, Eje, and Ebole Jonu. Ezike Attah could be one of the sons of these remote Attahs or any of the Attahs of the distant past not mentioned.

Ezike Attah was truly a descendant of one of the Attahs otherwise Aku people would have called him, Ezike Igala or Ezike Idah as has been the tradition. Aku people usually associate foreigners with the names of their places of origin. There was one Hausa man that lived in Ugwu-Nimbo Uwani-Otobo farm settlement. He was called Mara (Mallam) Nwebakpo, meaning Mallam, the Hausa. That is he was called according to his place of origin. We had Nwankwo Nwa Abagana, a motor transporter from Abagana who lived in Aku for many years and left Aku in the late '70s. There was also Goddy Nwa Awka, a truck driver who served the former. Okoro Ukpata, a professional basket maker lived in Aku in the olden days. He was from Ukpata in Uzo-Uwani. Eugene Nwangwo, a truck driver from Ngwo near Enugu lived in Aku. There is Oke Nwonicha from Oraukwu in Idemili near Onicha who is still living in Aku today.

Ezike Attah was not called after his place of origin but his father's name, because 'Attah' was a prominent name. So his surname instead of his place of origin is strongly maintained till today along with his brother, Ogwu Attah, the father of Nkpologwu Attah. No other immigrant from Igala had Attah as a surname. For example Diawa who ruled Aku and later became the father of some parts of Ohemuje did not, neither Asabero (Isa Bello, likely to be a Fulani war mercenary for Attah) nor Asadu who ruled Obimo and Nsukka respectively.

Again, umuada Umuezike would not have laid so much emphasis on Attah as evidenced in the lyrics of the above antiphon. They would not have been concerned with praying that God should protect Attah. How many Igala people who bear 'Attah' as first name or surname remember Attah in their prayers like our kinswomen? Again, a people who are distantly related to a person will not bother themselves with whatever happens to him. But Attah as their ancestor remains permanently in their memories; hence they ask God to protect Attah. It is just like the Igbo who always react naturally to anything that happens to Israel. For example illiterate Igbo market women in Onicha jubilated in 1948 when they heard that the State of Israel has been created. This action shows that there is a natural tie between Igbo and Israel. Therefore there is a blood tie between the Attah of that period and Umuezike. Aku, the father of some parts of Aku was an Igala but not from the Attah

dynasty, hence no importance was attached to his origin and the meaning of his name did not bother any person.

So Ezike Attah surely came from the loins of one of the Attahs or alternatively from Attah Igala Ruling Family. He was not just an ordinary Igalaman but a prince.

Ezike Attah's likely route to Aku

Ezike Attah came to Aku from Idah probably through Adoru, Okutu, Okpuje, Nrobu, Obimo, and finally settled on top of Ujere hill. Throughout his long journey of trekking day and night, pitching tents temporarily with the inhabitants of the above mentioned villages, he survived hostile people and pirates who might have attacked him on the way. This was possible for two reasons: first, Ezike Attah as a prince and Igala by blood had already trained as a warrior. So it was not easy for enemies to devour him on his way. Second, he was clutching in his hand the ark of his god, a pathfinder and protector (Ejiri). He hung on his shoulder also a giant bell (Oti) to debar any possible attack by a fellow Igala man. The very route might be the same that Aku traders later used during the trade with Igala.

When he settled at Ujere hill, he made a house with a thatched roof. He planted the ark of his god at the beginning of a gully close to Amaidi Ohemuje. The spot is called 'Ishi Ejiri'. It is there with us till today. The gully is called 'Okporoko Ejiri'.

Ezike Attah's accord with the Earlier Settlers

According to legend, as Ezike Attah stayed, the earlier inhabitants noticed a sort of human existence on the top of the hill. This was because they consistently saw smoke of fire in the day and flames of fire piercing the darkness of the night. So they went up the hill to meet with him. They asked him to come down and live with them. He agreed with them provided they would grant him his own request. He led them down to the beginning of the gully where he planted the ark. There he cut a certain twine (ogburugbu) at its base and asked the people to come back after eight days. When they came back on the eighth day, he told them that wherever the twine he cut eight days before terminated all the land at the whole length and width of it would be his. The inhabitants accepted. So, they together traced the then withered twine from Ishi Ejiri down to Ukwu Ube Owere Mgboko and finally ended at Agba-Eputu. That was how Umuezike occupied the most central location in

the geography of Aku, claimed the front and back of Okporoko Ejiri, Uzagba down to Adada river basin.

Ezike Attah at last came down to live on the plain after several pacts and treaties with the earlier dwellers which were likely to be Ekpura, Eriomu and Uhu. 'From various legends and the extant traditional music, Aku developed into a city state from the earliest communities of Ekpura, Eriomu and Uhu before the birth of Christ (Ezike Amadi, Visions, A Journal of Ejuona Acada Front 2000).

The very place Ezike Attah lived was at Onu Ekwetfu, the present day Onu-Uham Uwani-Otobo and Uwenu-Ezike Orogwo. That is why even today when any head of a kindred or hamlet dies, his body will be accompanied with Ikpa musical troupe (a cultural music and dance meant for heroes) to pay tribute to Ezike Attah at Onu-Ekwetfu before finally laying it to rest.

Family History

He probably came with his wife from Igala or from any of the villages he lived before coming to Aku. He might have married from among the earlier inhabitants and had a son called Ikwere Ezike. Ikwere could be the only child because nothing was ever mentioned about any other sibling. When he became of age, he separated from his father to live at the present day Onu-Ani Ikwere Ezike, about a hundred metres from Onu-Ekwetfu. Even till today, every serious dispute is settled by the entire Umuezike community at this spot. Nobody had been known to tell lies before this holy place and survived it. People who are not sure of what they stand for hardly agree to set their feet on this sacred ground to utter any word.

Ikwere Ezike married and had his first son, Ezike Orogwo-Omeme. Orogwo-Omeme might be the name of his mother. Ezike Orogwo-Omeme took his first name from his grand father, Ezike Attah. Ikwere had his second son, Ugwuzoke Omeme. Instead of Ugwuzoke Orogwo Omeme, Orogwo was cut off, hence Ugwuzoke Omeme. Therefore Ezike Orogwo Omeme and Ugwuzoke Omeme were from the same father and mother.

Thus, Ezike Orogwo-Omeme became the father of Uwenu Ezike Orogwo Omeme. They occupy some spots in northern and southern ends of Umuezike. There are three families that make up Uwenu Ezike Orogwo. They are: Umuekanri, Umualoke, and Umuibe. Iyidobu Nwezukwu (Bosco) and the

entire Ezukwuoke family are from Umuekanri. Sylvester Obeta Nwani is from Umuibe. Reuben Ezeamagwu, Aburo Onyima, Samuel Onyima and the rest are from Alope family. The members of Alope family are the majority.

Ugwuzoke Omeme was the father of Umuobara. His descendants occupy the central part of Umuezike.

Ezike Orogwo and Ugwuzoke as the first two sons of Ikwere Ezike still show that relationship and seniority to the rest of Umuezike today. Any ram, goat or cock brought to Onu Ekwetfu during the burial of a hero is shared between Uwenu and Umuobara, no other hamlet in Umuezike partakes. A man from Uwenu will cut off the head of the animal and drop the body for Umuobara who will then boil it and take it back to Uwenu. Uwenu will take her own part of the meat and give the remaining back to Umuobara.

It is good to point out here that Dunuokwu might not be the father of Umuobara as some school of thought believed. Dunuokwu was a great man and a dominating character, hence Umuobara Dunuokwu. Likewise, Ajogwu Anugwu was not the father of all Uwani-Otobo, though Uwani-Otobo is often being referred to as Uwani-Otobo Ajogwu Anugwu. He was a great man and a dominating character too. Often one hears the entire Umuezike being referred to as Umuezike Ajogwu Anugwu instead of Umuezike Attah. Amankpo Ndi-Ishi Ogba, Ndi-Ishi Ogba is an expression of the ageless old men usually seen in Amankpo in the olden days. The correct name is Amankpo Ezikenechi Erim. Amadiefioha Diotfue is also a misnomer. Rather it is Diotfue Diefioha Ikwere Ezike. Diefioha was the father of Diotfue. The word 'Amadiefioha' means a place or compound belonging to Diefioha.

Yet some schools of thought in the persons of Oruka Ezukwuoke and Ezeamugwu Okenyi; both from Uwenu Ezike Orogwo and Umuobara respectively denied having any other ancestral link apart from descending from Ezike Attah. They agreed on every other interrelationship activity. Yet they did not accept the fact that it is based on closer blood-tie that made them to have many things in common. It might be on this closer blood tie that made them to be the priests of Onu Ekwetfu, the heads of Odo masquerade in Umuezike, and the Oshegini and Ugwunyogidi (Otfu-Ehuru) Odo brotherly relationship. Finally Alope Ugwuoke and Orineji are the first to make music simultaneously on every Aho Odo Umuezike day and so on. The Oshegini/Ugwunyogidi is the only Odo masquerade that collects compulsory

tribute from every family in Umuezike. Okeanya Nwobiar' Elechi operates within Amadiefioha. Erim operates within Uwani Otobo and Amankpo.

Ezeamugwu Okenyi's genealogical version of Umuobara was very straight-----
 --- Dunuokwu had four sons in the following order: Ikedinobu, Ugwuzoke Omeme, Ekabuoyi, and Nwadike. Ikedinobu was the father of Uwenu Umuobara while Ugwuzoke Omeme was the father of Uwani Umuobara. Nwadike was the father of Ndi Udeogu Ugwu. Ekabuoyi was an outstanding warrior amongst the sons of Dunuokwu. It happened that inter-communal wars from the neighbouring towns were ravaging the entire Mgboko community in those days. He was sent by his father to go and deliver the people from the hostile neighbouring communities bordering with the western part of Aku and the invading Igala soldiers. He went and settled finally at Umudimotfue. He became the father of some parts of Umudimotfue. The other part is Umumkpume, the aborigines.

Though Ezeamugwu was quick in his exposition, but he was unable to connect Dunokwu to as a direct descendant of Ikwere Ezike. It was Igwebueze Ochieka who insisted that the father of Umuobara was Ugwuzoke Omeme. This word 'Omeme' is a common surname to Ezike Orogwo Omeme and Ugwuzoke. The Oshushua (forest) Nwugwuzoke at Adada River basin is a farmstead belonging to entire Umuobara not exclusively to Uwani Umuobara. It is not called Oshushua Dunokwu. This simply indicates that Dunokwu is not the father of all Umuobara but Ugwuzoke Omeme, the next to Ezike Orogwo Omeme.

The father of Di-Efioha or Di-Efioha himself became the third son of Ikwere Ezike. He was the father of Uwenu Orinogwu. Di-Otfue was another of his sons who peopled Umu-Di-Ayom, Umuoduge, Umuaroke and Umuokeshu. There are two families that make up Umudiayom: Umu-Ugwu Nwokpe, and Umugwuanyi Ogbonne with Ezike Ogbata Okpe Omaga (Ezike Ugwuanyi) as the head. In Umuoduge, we have four families: Umu-umad' Obara, Umuekwetfu, Umudidigwu Ogbonne, and Umunwocha. Ezeagu Obunwa is the head of Umuoduge. Umuokeshu has Clement Agada as the head. In Umuaroke we have: Umuochoke, Umuagubuzu, Umuokwuru and Umudugwu Odobo. Dugwu Iguegbe is the head of Umuaroke.

In Uwenu Orinogwu, we have Umuajuga Uzoke, Umudinwoke Uzoke, Umuonashie Odige and Umudialoke Uzoke. Ozo Nwamadi is the head and

the head of the entire Amadiefioha. It is good to say that every other kindred in Umuezike got a head. I do not want to go on listing all the heads.

Ikwere Ezike had his fourth son probably in his very old age who became the father of Erim. This very last son of Ikwere Ezike married a daughter of Diayom in Amadiefioha. That is he married from the descendants of his elder brother, Diefioha. This practice was common in the olden days when people were few on earth. We can remember in the Bible whereby Abraham married Sarah his own brother's daughter. This very maiden was Arua Iyinye/Inyinye who became the mother of Erim. He was called Erim Iyinye/Inyinye after his mother's surname. His own father's name disappeared. There is nothing we did not do to fish out the name of Erim's father but all failed. My uncle, Akubue Ochiagha when I asked him about the paternity of Erim regretted that Nnadi Ogo Nwugwu and even Oganenjo Ezea both of whom would have supplied me with the information were no more. It is clear that Erim should be a grandson of Ikwere Ezike. The mother of Arua Iyinye was Lolo Ekenyi from Ugwuegede.

Erim started life around the present day Onu Ani Ikwere Ezike. There was no other person/s identified as Erim's brother or sister from the same mother, Arua Iyinye. Erim married Nnenna (Ninaa) Iyeregwuma from the same descent with Ndiozokeru Ogida in Umuohagwu Obie. It was suspected that Ninaa Iyeregwuma had no issue for Erim yet her name dominated the other wife or wives of Erim to the extent that praise singers refer him as Erim di Ninaa (Erim the husband of Ninaa). An equivalent case today is that of Ezikanyi Nwenyi from Uwani-Otobo. He had about five wives but Onokoro Nwoti was the only wife who was known by even a child in Aku.

Erim had three sons in the following order of age: Ezikoro Erim, Ezike Erim and Ezikenechi Erim. The youngest son, Ezikenechi was seen as a stubborn lad and was treated as such by his father and his elder brothers. He left home to live first at Oro-Odo. From there he traversed the length and width of the present areas occupied by Ama-Eta Ofienyi and Ukwuvuru including Umuogbonna. He later moved northward to the area presently inhabited by Umudo Ofienyi. As he moved, he cultivated the land. That is why about three quarters of the land occupied by Ofienyi belong to Amankpo. Several evidences to that claim exist today. Onu Ezukwugwo Nwanako, a sacred spot behind Umuogbonna in Ofienyi belongs to Amankpo. There was a time in the near past when it was being used as Uham Agubazu, an Odo masquerade from Amankpo. Ezukwugwo Nwanako was also from Amankpo.

Ezikenechi lived for several years at the spot being inhabited by Umudo today. He became prosperous in farming. He had many cows for example. One year he invited his father, Erim to come to his house and see his farm produce. Erim went and after performing some rituals he finally blessed him. The spot where Ezikenechi lived is still there at Umudo today. He still left that place and built a permanent structure in the centre of the area occupied by Amankpo today. After finishing the house, he heaved a sigh of relief saying: 'I shall never leave this spot again (Amankpo)'. Some school of thought believed that the statement is rather a boast from his descendants who think that no body can shake them. The very spot where he lived is still with us today. It is called Onu Ezikenechi, a small forest by the right-hand side along the footpath leading from Otobo Amankpo to Onu Nwuroko.

Ezikenechi married Uba Ezukwugwo Nwanwunye from Amaogwu Aku. Her brothers were Onoke, the father of Umuonoke, Uwani Arama, Amegu Amaogwu and Amauwenu Amaogwu. Their mother was from Ikolo. Uba gave birth to Ezike Ngwoke, Ezike Aroke and Ezike Amoke. It can be observed here that the three sons of Ezikenechi all bear Ezike as their first name. To differentiate one Ezike from another, they were surnamed according to the surnames of their godfathers who were probably from other parts of Aku. The three Ezike were the direct sons of Ezikenechi.

Ezike Ngwuoke married from Umuohagwu Obie. The surname of the maiden was Ogbo. She gave birth to Ezukwugwo Ogbo, Ezikoro Ogbo, Okomo Ogbo, Ezikenechi Ogbo and lastly, Ogbachi Ogbuagu Ogbo. Ezukwugwo Ogbo was named after his grand-paternal mother's father, Ezukwugwo Nwanwunye from Amogwu Aku. He added his own mother's surname, Ogbo. Ezikoro was named after his grand-paternal uncle, Ezikoro Erim. His mother's surname was also his. Ezikenechi was named after his grand father, Ezikenechi Erim. The interesting thing here is that all took up Ogbo as their surname. They never answered Ezike or Ngwuoke which are the father's names as surname. The fifth son whose middle name was Ogbuagu adopted it as an alias. It was like the examples I gave before: Anibueze Ghana Ishihe and Diyoke Oganenjo Ezea. Or it might be the full names of his godfather, Ogbachi Ogbuagu. Ogbo was then added to it as his surname just like Ugwu Ishihe Ihuagu. The first name and surname of his godfather were lifted in verbatim only for the father's name to be annexed at the end.

The remaining two brothers of Ezike Ngwuoke did not have large families like him. They were Ezike Aroke, the father of Umuezike Aroke (Ndi Ukwu Udara) and Ezike Amoke the father of Umuezike Amoke of Ejiri priesthood family.

Ezikenechi Ogbo, the fourth son of Ezike Ngwuoke married from Umuobara. He married the grand daughter of Omaga Iyinye. Omaga Iyinye was from Umudiyom in Amadiefioha. She was a niece to Arua Iyinye, the mother of Erim Iyinye. The name of this grand daughter of Omaga Iyinye was Ninaa (Nnenna), meaning mother of her father. Some individuals were fond of calling her Omaga Iyinye after her paternal grandmother's name, who happened to be her godmother. Many people rather confused the whole thing by calling her 'Omaga Ninaa' as if Ninaa was her surname. They were only repeating the same name. She would better be called 'Omaga' or 'Ninaa' because any of the two can serve as her first name.

Her sons were Ezenechi Omaga, Ezukwuoke Omaga, Okeazi Omaga, Ohemeari Omaga and Nwodo Nwomaga. Ezikenechi Ogbo did not have Omaga as the only wife. He had another wife from Umudo Ofienyi called Enem Okpe. This woman had only one son for him. The name is Ezukwugwoke Ezikenechi. Ezukwugwoke in turn had a son called Odeke. Odeke was surnamed after his paternal grandmother's name, Enem Okpe hence Odeke Enem. The six families today are known as Umuezikenechi Ogbo. It can be seen that none of the five sons of Ezikenechi Ogbo which he got from Omaga answered Ezikenechi or Ogbo as surname but Omaga, their mother's name. It was Ezukwugwoke only who answered his father's name as surname. But his son, Odeke took up his grand paternal mother's first name as surname that was why he was called Odeke Enem.

The rest of the brothers of Ezikenechi Ogbo for example: Ezukwugwo Ogbo was the father of Umuezukwugwo. Ezikoro Ogbo was the father of Umuezikoro Ogbo. The families of Amukworu Nwaenyisi that is the people of Enyasi Nnadi and Francis Okagu descended from Ezikoro Ogbo. Okomo Ogbo was the father of Umu-Okomo. People like Amadi Dugwu, Ezike Ezikeanyi, Akworuja Didigwu for example, descended from Okomo. Ogbachi Ogbuagu Ogbo was the father of Umu-Ogbachi. Nwodo Nwamuka, Peter Nwezea, Ochi Nwogbu Nweze, to name just a few, descended from Ogbachi Ogbuagu Ogbo.

Ezenechi Omaga prospered in number more than any of his brothers from the same father, Ezikenechi Ogbo. That was how Ezikenechi Ogbo multiplied

through Ezenechi Omaga more than Okomo, Ezikoro, Ezukwugwo, and Ogbachi Ogbo. It was the same way Ezike Ngwoke had more children than Ezike Aroke and Ezike Amoke, his brothers. Ezikenechi Erim, their father was also more blessed in number than Ezikoro Erim and Ezike Erim.

Ezenechi Omaga became the father of Egwuete Eze, Urama Eze, Ezukwuoke Eze, Onanya Eze, and Okugo Eze. Ezenechi as the surname of the above mentioned five sons was shortened to Eze. So instead of Egwuete Ezenechi for example, it is Egwuete Eze.

One should be careful not to be confused between Ezikenechi Erim, the father of the entire Amankpo community and his grandson, Ezikenechi Ogbo, the fourth son of Ezike Ngwuoke. This grandson peopled a major part of Amankpo. When Umuezikenechi is mentioned, one should ascertain whether it is Umuezikenechi Ogbo which is talking about a fraction of Amankpo or Umuezikenechi Erim which takes care of the entire Amankpo community.

The two elder brothers of Ezikenechi Erim: Ezikoro Erim and Ezike Erim were the fathers of Uwani-Otobo. Numerically, their descendants cannot match those of their youngest brother's.

For example, Ezikoro Erim peopled not a large community called Umuezikoro Erim. There are three families that make up Umuezikoro Erim: Umuasogba Amenyi, Umuezikoro Eze, and Umunwasa. Note: it is a misnomer to refer to Umuezikoro Erim as Umu Ugwuinyi Eriom. Ugwuinyi Eriom was the ancestral father of Umunwasa not the entire Umuezikoro Erim. He lived in Izere and that is why the greater part of the land at Izere belongs to Umunwasa. Bazuka Nnadi for example descended from Asogba Amenyi. Iyi Ochiagha, Titus Nwani and Onyeka Ezugwu for example come from Nwasa Ike. Presently there is no surviving male in the family of Umuezikoro Eze.

Ezike Erim became the father of Ajogwu and Odeme Anugwu. Ajogwu and Odeme answered after their mother's name, Anugwu Dugwu Ocha from Uwenu Orinogwu in Amadiefioha. They would have been correctly called Ajogwu and Odeme Ezike Erim. So, the wife of Ezike Erim was Anugwu Dugwu Ocha. It can be remembered that Oganenjo Ezea (a descendant of Ajogwu) during his time for example was paying tribute in this regard to Uwenu Orinogwu during Egorigo Odo festival. This was in appreciation to the fact that his ancestral mother, Anugwu Dugwu Ocha came from there.

Odeme Anugwu peopled the three families in the present day Umuodeme. They are: Umuakagbue, Umunevu, and Umuelechi. Jonathan Anyanwogo and Stephen Dugwu for example are from Umuakagbue. Nnamdi Amadi (Nwamato) is from Umunevu. Oliver Okwo is from Umuelechi.

Ajogwu peopled the rest of Uwani-Otobo. They form the larger part of Uwani-Otobo. He had two sons from different wives. The name of the first son was Ezikoro Ajogwu who in turn peopled Umuodugwu and Umuito. Ezikoro Ajogwu was named after his paternal grand-uncle, Ezikoro Erim.

The families in Umuodugwu are Umuanoke Echem and Umuelechi Echem. The two are brothers. Chris Amadi, Uzochukwu Amadi and Cletus Ogbu are from Umuanoke Echem. Emma Nwoganenjo and Okoro Ezea are from Umuelechi Echem. Others are Umuagwoeke Otibeje with T. Benson Chukwuma as a descendant. Chibuzo Mba descended from Umuzoegueba. There is also Umudiarua Igbojeme with Obinna Ozor as a descendant. Last but not the least is Umuezeamagu Odugwu. Sunday Nwodo and Iyidobu Sabastian Attah are from this family. Note: the last four families above have presently teamed into one while the first two families above have separated.

The families in Umuito are: Umudidigwu Ishienyi. Augustine, Adokoeze and Sunday Ugwu are from this family. Umuokpe Isienyi. Boniface, Dugwu Simon Okpe and Mathew Okpe come from this family. Umuzo Ishienyi. Livinus Ozo and William Ozo come from this family. Umuntfude Ishienyi. Joseph Okpe comes from this family.

The second son of Ajogwu was Ezike Erim Omashi/Umashi. He was named after his grand father, Ezike Erim and his own mother's name annexed at the end. It became Ezike Erim the son of Omashi. This was probably to differentiate him from his grand father. Omashi Ogehu from Obimo was his mother. Therefore Ezike Erim Omashi peopled the entire Umuagana. The name 'Agana' is suspected to be an alias just as Oganenjo as an alias has dominated the original name of Diyoke Ezea. One can easily notice the proper name of Umuagana whenever Uwani-Otobo is giving them any task to carry out or making any reference to them. At that time Uwani-Otobo hardly calls them Umuagana but Umuezike Erim Omashi.

Today, there are four families in Umuagana: Umuawoke Agana, Umuodeke Agana, Umueze, and Umugwudoha Digwu. Uchenna Ezeamagu and

Anibueze Nnadi (Benze) come from Umuawoke. Cyprain Nwodo, Paulinus Nwodo and Amu Nwodo come from Umuodeke. Igwe Chris Okwo (Ochendo 1 of Ihekwenue) Macmilian Ugwu and Daniel Ugwu come from Umueze. Augustine Attah and Mike Isife come from Umugwudoha.

Note: For clarity turn to the next chapter for John Nwodo's genealogical chart.

Conclusion

Umuezike is one of the clans in Aku that is conscious of her root. This is because her ancestral line remains prominent in the minds of all Aku. Of course Attah is not a figure to be forgotten easily or Idah a place of obscurity. That is why some people think that Umuezike just settled yesterday. This consciousness is what the descendants of 'Aku', a fellow Igala could not hold. He was the father of Mgboko and few other villages in Aku.

The descendants of Ezike Attah, Aku and other earlier settlers were later unified into one name, 'Aku'. 'Also, worthy of note was Aku unification of various but hitherto strange peoples, tribes and language groups, who after conquests and counter-conquests, treaties and their abrogation; negotiations and accords through the ages, agreed to live together under the leadership of one terminal conqueror called Aku', (Ezike Amadi, Visions 2000).

Aku is an Igala name and Igala men still bear it. Aku people answer Igala names without knowing their meanings hence the name 'Aku' has no special meaning to them. 'To Aku people, the name has no special meaning nor is any connection traced to other towns and people that answer Aku: wealth, palm kernel or eatable ants that fly in the night. It does not mean also the designation for some kings in Northern Nigeria like the Aku Uka of Wukari,' (L.O. Ocho 1974).

'Aku' is an Igala word meaning gateway (Onu-Ofu). That is the special meaning of the name of the Igala man who became the dominant character that the entire town came to be called after his name. It cannot mean wealth for Aku people pronounce wealth as ek'. It does not mean kernel for the first and last letters in ak' are pronounced with high tone. It is not eatable ant that flies in the night for it is called mkpu. Other Igala names that Aku people

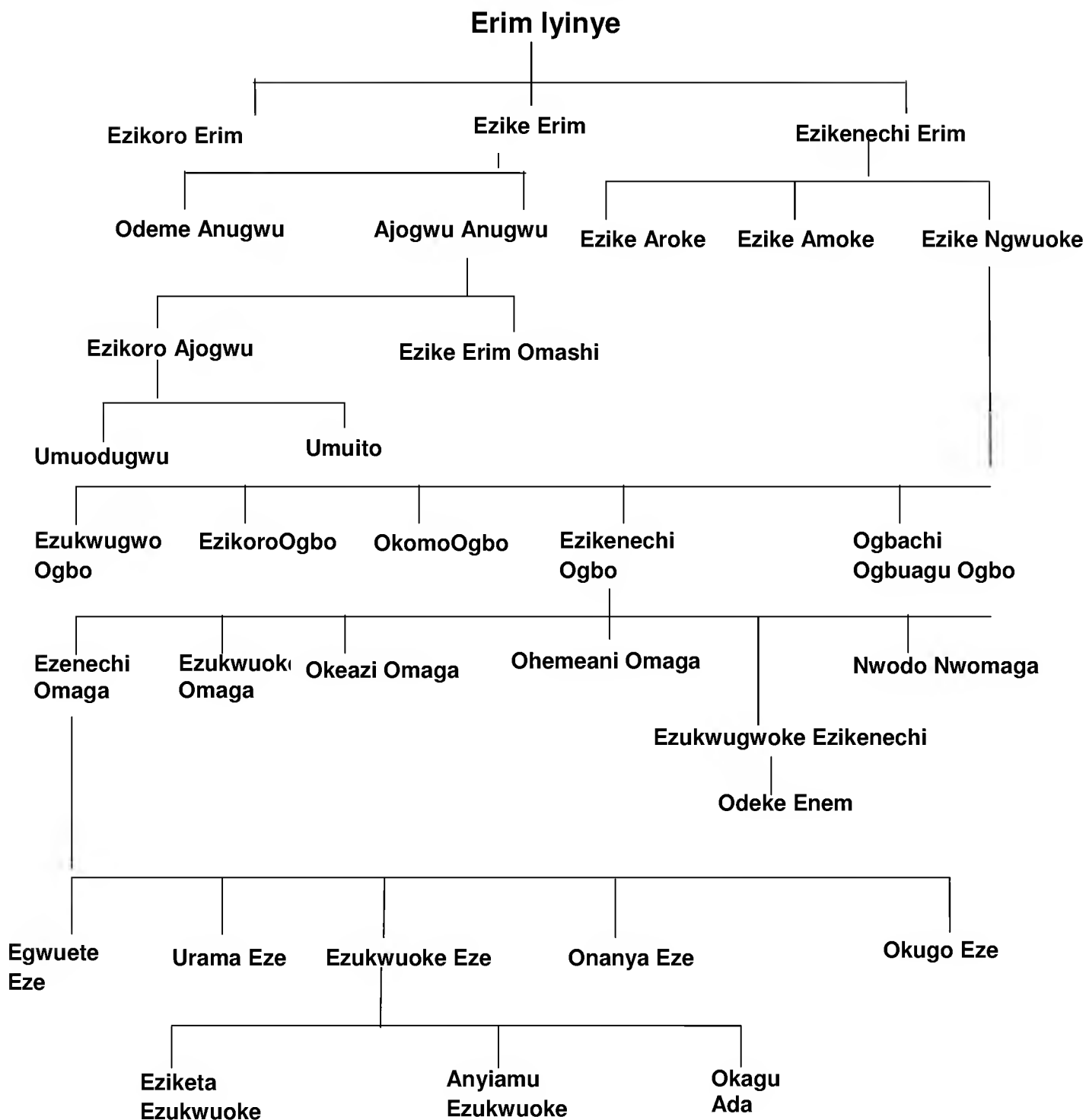
answer without knowing their meanings are: Okwori, Okakwu, Onodi, Edoga, Agaba, Odeke, Agbowu, Okide, Awed' and Ajogwu. The meanings of some of them have been explained earlier in this chapter.

Finally, issues about exact origins of Aku people should not be taken too rigidly and with too much assurance since it is a matter of time and space, much of which is lost in our unrecorded oral history. So whether Use and Umundikwu came from Nri or the rest of Nua came from Nkanu or Umuezike from Igala, has never been over emphasized in the past and present scheme of things: Our interest has been focused on virtues and lessons derivable from the past experiences of our people and our present capabilities to build and improve upon the achievements of our past heroes. The autonomous community issues should not be an obstacle to our motto, 'Eha nna anyi ka anyi ji aga'

Chapter Three

Umuerim Genealogical Chart

by
John Emeka Nwodo



The Ancestral Origin of Umuerim as represented in the Chart above.

Brief History of Umuerim

Erim Iyinye, the father of Uwani-Otobo and Amankpo had three sons: Ezikoro Erim, Ezike Erim, and Ezikenechi Erim, the father of Amankpo. Ezikenechi's brothers became jealous of him. They looked at him as being over ambitious and Erim was made to see him in that light. Ezikenechi was just an industrious lad who was not ready to share his future life plan with any body before it was carried out. He believed in producing result for people to see (emegde ahugda). It was this attitude that finally earned him the envy of his brothers including his father.

So like Okonkwo of 'Things Fall Apart,' he hated being a failure. He left home early in life to be on his own and prove his worth ahead of his brothers. Within few years Ezikenechi had acquired farm lands that traversed the present areas occupied by Ama-Eta Ofienyi, Ukwu-Uvuru including Umuogbonna and Umudo Ofienyi. He finally acquired the land presently occupied by Amankpo.

In the process his brothers had continued to carry ill report of him to their father. They wanted their father to stop him. He was not stopped by his father. He lived in all these acquired lands starting from Oro-Odo to Umudo and then the present location of Amankpo.

There were two versions of the story on how he later reconciled with his father. The first was that he invited his father to see his wealth and from there they came together again. The second as was told by Enyi Nwagu had it that Aku people intervened at the peak of his success as a farmer and settled the case between him and his father. The verdict being that he should rejoin his family. Ezikenechi insisted he would no longer leave the place hence 'Amankpo' to go back to his ancestral home. He rather told them that he would be taking yearly tribute from his farm produce to his father at the present location of Uwani-Otobo. This was accepted by Aku people including his father. Ezikenechi was faithful to his word till he and his father were no more. Their descendants continued from where their fathers stopped using Odo masquerades to represent the two men. Igede Eze Okikpe Odo represents Ezikenechi while Erim Okikpe Odo represents Erim.

How the Tribute is paid Today

Igede Eze comes to Otobo Uwani every Aho Odo Umuezike day to pay the tribute. It is an interesting drama that draws people from every corner of Aku. The stage is set when Igede appears to the arena decked with horse tails (Nza) and other paraphernalia that actually show that he is wealthy. Two big fish are fixed on him, one on his forehead and the other on his chest.

The drama starts when Erim demands to take the fish at the forehead of Igede. He will point at it expecting Igede to kneel before him for his hand to reach to the fish. In reply, Igede will insist that Erim should take the one on his chest as the two fish are equal in size. The argument lasts for some minutes and they walk away in opposite directions. Then they will later come back for another round and they will disagree again; Erim insisting that Igede should squat while the latter remains unbent.

Sometimes when they do not agree they retire to Onu ani Ikwere Ezike to rest. After resting they go back to continue in the process. The drama lasts for long before Erim will accept the one proffered to him by Igede. The drama actually signifies the way the father and the son had disagreed several times in their life time but agreed at last. It is better watched than the way I have explained here.

Ezikenechi Erim----Ezukwugwo Nwanwunye (wife).

Their sons are:

- Ezike Aroke
- Ezike Amoke
- Ezike Ngwoke

Notes: Ezike Aroke is the father of the present Umu Ezike Aroke family in Amankpo. They are also known as Ndi ukwu udara. Ezike Amoke peopled the present Umu Ezike Amoke family. The priestly dynasty of Ejiri Deity belongs to the people.

Ezike Ngwoke is the father of the rest of Amankpo whose descendants continue as:

Ezike Ngwoke-----Ogbo (wife).

Their sons are:

- Ezukwugwo Ogbo
- Ezikoro Ogbo
- Okomo Ogbo
- Ezikenechi Ogbo

- Ogbachi Ogbuagu Ogbo

Notes: Ezukwugwo Ogbo begot the present Umu Ezukwugwo Ogbo family in Amankpo. Agu Diarua Onodugo, Ezike Ode, Odo Reginard, Charles Odeke and many others descended from Ezukwugwo Ogbo.

Ezikoro Ogbo was the father of the present Anyasi Nnadi and Okagu Dinwoke families in Amankpo. For example Amukworu Nwaenyasi and Francis Okagu hail from these two families respectively. In every cultural and social activity these two families do everything in common with Umu Ezukwugwo Ogbo family.

Okomo Ogbo became the father of the present Umu Okomo Ogbo family in Amankpo. People like Amadi Dugwu, Ignatius Ezeamugwu (Determination), Joseph Ezeanyi, Emmanuel Didigwu and others descended from Okomo.

Ogbachi Ogbuagu Ogbo was the father of Ihuogbachi family. People like Ochi Nwogbu Nweze, Nwodo Nwamuka, and others came from him.

Ezikenechi Ogbo peopled the major part of Amankpo. He had two wives:

- Omega (Ninna), from Umuobara the grand daughter of Omega Iyinye.
- Enem Okpe from Umudo Ofienyi.

The sons of Omega were: Okazi Omega, Ezenechi Omega, Ezukwuoke Omega, Oheme Omega, Nwodo Omega.

Enem Okpe had only one son for Ezikenechi in the person of Ezukwugwoke Ezikenechi.

Okazi Omega is the ancestral father of Umu Ugwudoha Okazi in Amankpo. People like Lawrence Ezoyiri, Victor Mba, Chris Attah, Romanus Mba, and others descended from Okazi Omega. Okazi Omega was the eldest son of Ezikenechi Ogbo.

Ezukwuoke Omega is the father of the present Umu Ezukwuoke Omega family in Amankpo. Pharmacist Chris Nnadikwu, Odo Nnabuchi, Mbonadi Odenyi and others are the descendants of Ezukwuoke Omega.

Oheme Omega became the father of the present Umu Oheme family in Amankpo. Elder Igwebueze Ochieka, Okereke Ochieka, Godwin Akumagwo and others came from this family.

Nwodo Omega: His descendants are Enyi Nwagu, Emmanuel Agu, Paul Agu and others. They make up Umu Nwodo Nwomaga family in Amankpo.

Ezukuwugwoke Ezikenechi was the only son of his mother, Enem Okpe. He in turn had a son called Odeke Enem. This son took the grandmother's name, Enem Okpe as his surname. The present Umu Odeke Enem in Amankpo descended from him. Oyibundu Ugwueke, John Emeka Nwodo (the author), Romanus Ugwueke, William Ozota, Ezike Akumagwo, Joseph Ugwueke and others are some of his descendants. My father Amadi Nwodo (late) in his life time insisted on answering Odeke Ezikenechi as ascribed to him by 'Igara' litany instead of Nwomaga as people mistakenly called him thinking he descended from Omega, the dominant name.

Ezenechi Omega was one of the five sons of Ezikenechi Ogbo. He was the father of many families in Amankpo today. His sons were:

- Egwuete Eze, who in turn became the father of the present Umu Egwuete Eze family in Amankpo. Some of his descendants include Amuzeru Ezea, Denis Onukarigbo (JP), Felix Nwobodo, Cletus Ezea, Kenneth Ezea, and Ogbonna Ani.
- Urama Eze, the father of the present Umu Urama Eze family has the following as his descendants Callistus Nwazi, Felix Amadi, Cyprain Otti, Joseph Nwazi, Solomon Amadi and others.
- Okugo Eze became the ancestral father of the present families of Nwodo Ugwu, Isaac Ugwu, Cyril Ugwu and others.
- Onanya Eze: People like Odo Onanya, Godwin Onanya and others descended from Onanya Eze.
- Ezukwuoke Eze: This is the ancestral father of the three families that make up Umu Ezukwuoke Eze in Amankpo. They are:
- Eziketa Ezukwuoke: He is the ancestral father of the present Umu Eziketa Ezukwuoke Eze family in Amankpo. His descendants are Amukworu Nwezike, Igwe Clement Ezike, Vincent Amadi, Uzuaku Nwamadi and others.
- Anyiamu Ezukwuoke: The present Umu Anyiamu Ezukwuoke Eze family members descended from him. People like Ezike Nwani, Prof. R.O. Ani, Stephen Ugbor, Amadijiogu Egbuagu, and Patrick Ugwu are some of his descendants.
- Okagu Ada: This man's family name should be Ezeagu Ezukwuoke Eze. But because he came from a different mother, Okagu Ada Ninna Enem, he was called 'nwa Okagu Ada'. His descendants are the

present members of Umu Okagu Ada family in Amankpo. People like Sylvanus Ezeamagu, Boniface Ezeamagu, Christopher Ezeamagu, Malachy Onunze, Barrister Nwadimkpa Amadi and others descended from Ezeagu Ezukwuoke Eze.

Conclusion

Ezenechi Omaga was a listening child to his parents. The father, Ezikenechi Ogbo had absolute confidence on him because of the way he obeyed his father in every thing. He knew all the father's secrets. It was because of his loyalty to his father and the way he was over seeing and protecting the interests of his brothers, that he was highly regarded by his father.

Chapter Four

The Event that promoted Uwani-Otobo to the first Position

by

Iyi Ochiagha

Uwenu Ezike Orogwo as we all know was the first family in Umuezike by the fact that their father, Ezike Orogwo Omeme was the oldest son of Ikwere Ezike Attah. He was followed by the father of Umuobara, Amadiefioha, and Uwani-Otobo/Amankpo. Material gains were also shared in that order of age.

In the course of time, there was a twist of fate that caused a rearrangement of the former order. One unfortunate incident occurred when a man by name Egbegu Ezike Orogwo became the oldest man (onyishi) in his hamlet, Uwenu Ezike Orogwo. Apart from being the onyishi, he was also a renowned herbalist who travelled far and wide administering medicine to his clients. A time came when he left home probably for the same purpose and did not return.

There was a lad, the son of his daughter living with him who helped in carrying for him, the Staff of office, 'Arua' whenever he was visiting the shrine of his gods for sacrifices or to do cleansing offering for his people. Each time Egbegu left for his business the people who needed the 'Onyishi' to offer sacrifice to their gods would call the lad to bring his grandfather's staff of office to the shrine. This had been going on for a long time. However a time came when Egbegu travelled and it became clear that his return was not assured, the lad craftly and secretly made away with the Staff of office back to his paternal home, Uwani-Otobo.

A contention ensued between the two hamlets when the people of Uwenu Ezike Orogwo demanded the return of the Staff to their place. The lad with the support of his people insisted that the Staff would be returned only when Egbegu who gave the Staff to the lad returned. But the truth was that Egbegu did not make any statement of hand-over to the lad. The case became fierce that too many interest groups were involved. There were lobbying, counter lobbying and intrigues. At the end of the day the person who lobbied more carried the day. The lad finally won the case. The verdict was that the lad would not hand over the paraphernalia till the person who gave it to him returned. It was a misjustice for the arbitrators to uphold the stand of Uwani-Otobo. Up till now Egbegu has not returned.

The agony of the Verdict

Based on the above conclusion, Uwenu Ezike Orogwo lost their first position to Uwani-Otobo. Umuobara insisted on their second position and Amadiefioha maintained her third position. They were left with no option than to bring up the rear. Though they occupy the fourth position and Amankpo fifth, they still see themselves as last considering Amankpo as a part of Uwani Otobo. Till today they see the verdict as a foul play. They have the following points:

- It was not a case of one selling his birth right like the Biblical Esau, but a case of robbing one of his birth-right by the mightier power.
- The lad should not have claimed Egbegu gave him the staff of office he simply collected it where it was kept and left in secret.
- Egbegu would not have given him the staff because it was not his own personal property but a staff of office which he inherited by the fact that he was the oldest man in the family. This would be in turn taken over by the next oldest man to him.
- If it was true Egbegu gave him the staff, Egbegu would have made the pronouncement in the presence of his people, Uwenu Ezike Orogwo. It was not something that would be hidden.
- When they discovered that the staff was missing they followed it up immediately just like a person who was searching for his missing item.

Some school of thought believed the lad was Ajogwu, the father of Umuodugwu, Umuito, and Umuagana. This belief is wrong. He was rather a descendant of Ajogwu. The name of the lad could not be remembered.

The Internal Negative application of the Verdict.

For the fact that it was Umuajogwu who were directly involved in the matter above, they believe that the same thing should be applied within Uwani-Otobo. They try to assume the leadership and enjoy all the benefits forgetting that taking the position of Uwenu Ezike Orogwo should only be applied in matters concerning Umuezike in general not matters concerning Umu-Erim. The children of Erim are Amankpo and Uwani-Otobo and the first son of Erim was Ezikoro Erim. He peopled Umuezikoro Erim.

It was probably the same reason of a winner should have it all that Ani Nwoshinigwe and Nnadi Ogo Nwugwu from Umuezikoro Erim were denied of being Onyishi Uwani-Otobo respectively. I got to know this during the leadership tursle between Ozor Nwamadi and the rest of Amadiefioha.

Amadiefioha people several times during the deliberation challenged Uwani-Otobo to say why they denied the two men mentioned above of their Onyishi Uwani-Otobo. Till now no answer was given. I believe such ugly past shall not repeat itself in this modern time when people are more civilized. The present and future generations of Umuezikoro Erim would not have taken such uncivilized behaviour against their kinsmen.

In summary, therefore that Umuajogwu through Uwani-Otobo is the Onyishi Umuezike does not mean that they are the Onyishi Uwani-Otobo. Rather it is Umuezikoro Erim, the children of the first son of Erim. Nobody took away Oho Erim (Erim's paraphernalia) to any party of Uwani-Otobo unlike that of Ezike Orogwo. The Oho Erim is still with Umuezikoro Erim today. Umuezikoro Erim is the Onyishi Umuerim-----Amankpo and Uwani-Otobo.

Chapter Five

The relationship observed among Umu-Erim

by

Iyi Ochiagha

As we have known that Erim, a descendant of Ezike Attah, the father of Umuezike had three sons: Ezikoro Erim, the first son, Ezike Erim, the second son, and Ezikenechi Erim, the third son. Ezikoro Erim and Ezike Erim peopled Uwani-Otobo, while Ezikenechi was the father of Amankpo.

In the order of sharing material gains among the children of Ezike Attah, Uwani Otobo and Amankpo were treated as one. They together occupied the fourth position on the ladder of age. In the course of time when the population of Amankpo was growing fast, the two were separated into two hamlets.

Though being an entity, Amankpo still have many things in common with Uwani Otobo. By the way they relate, one can easily notice the strong blood tie. They see Uwani Otobo as their elder brother. It is a misconception to think that Uwani Otobo is the father of Amankpo. It is not so, rather they are brothers with one father in the person of Erim.

Evidences of the Relationships

- In every Aho Odo Umuezike, Igede Eze Okikpe Odo masquerade pays tribute to Erim Odo masquerade. Igede Eze represents Ezikenechi. A crowd of people always accompanies him as he comes to Otobo Uwani-Otobo for the ritual.
- During the fourth month of Odo masquerade year, it is only Amankpo and Uwani-Otobo that celebrate it as the month of Umu-Erim.
- In the fifth month of the same Odo year, a day is set aside for all the Umu Erim Odo masquerades. They go round the entire five hamlets that make up Umuezike to collect little tokens from every family. They even go as far as plucking crops like maize and pumpkin from nearby people's farms. Surprisingly, people do not complain or protest against this act rather they get prepared for that day by fencing their farms. Yet there is still a law that guides Umu Erim while plucking people's farm produce. They do not enter into any farm but can stretch their hands to pluck corns or pumpkins very close to the paths or roads. "Umu Erim na-ez'

oshi akara” is the general saying and that is accepted. Presently, the rest of ‘Oridede odo’ from the remaining three hamlets have joined in the act.

- Uroko Otobo Odo sets aside three days making music for Erim in the fifth month of Odo year. It is believed that he is barbing his father, Erim (Uroko na-akpu Erim ishi).
- When Erim goes into his fattening room usually for three native weeks (Erim no n’iba), no odo masquerade from Amankpo and Uwani-Otobo comes out within the period.

Many a time in the past some factions of Amankpo people who became uncomfortable with the relationship especially the first item in the evidences above revolted and damned the history. Each revolt always landed them into trouble. They have the following reasons:

- They were not happy that a crowd like Amankpo will leave their own arena to go to Uwani Otobo, a smaller population when compared with theirs to pay homage.
- They frowned at the idea of Igede Eze, a giant with all his paraphernalia squatting just for Erim to collect the biggest fish from his head.
- They envied Erim (Okikpe) for aiming at the biggest fish in front of Igede Eze’s head. One year, one Elder Attah Nwugwu Otfuete out of envy quickly detached a small fish on the chest of Igede Eze and offered to Erim; without allowing him make his choice. Erim out of anger for what the man had done collected from his own head a horsetail (nza) and whipped the man with it. The man did not live to see the next Odo season.

This relationship started with Ezikenechi, the father of Amankpo. Though he separated from his father, Erim and the two elder brothers because he was not easily submissive to any of them, he was very prosperous. He traversed the whole area of Orodo and Ofienyi and settled permanently at the present day Amankpo. He still offered the father the first fruit of his farm crops; notwithstanding he had disagreed with him in the past on several issues.

Not very long, they quarreled again. In this one Erim was quite grieved that he swore never to be seen by his son, not even at death. The very day Erim died, Ezikenechi did not receive the information in time. He was busy tending to his cattle at Izere, a grazing field close to okporoko Ejiri. When the information got to him later in the day, he did not even go to Uwani-Otobo but quickly sent for his age grade in all corners of Aku. As they trooped into his compound, he asked them to gather for him as many cannon guns as they could see. He also

bought many barrels of gunpowder. Throughout the evening of that day, his friends and servants were busy eating and drinking as they loaded the cannon guns. It was about suppertime the same day that the cannon guns started shooting. It began in a sequential procession and later randomly. The entire land of Aku quaked, the people of Aku and all the surrounding communities panicked as the shooting seemed to continue non-stop.

At the break of the day the entire people of Aku trooped into his compound to discover he was burying his father. He made sure that every person that set his feet into his compound ate and drank to satisfaction. This, he did for three native weeks, yet there was still some left over barrels of millet in his house. Cows were also being slaughtered in twos every day. Ezikenechi spent so lavishly that people never knew that Erim had two other sons. Finally, Erim was buried at Uwani-Otobo at a spot close to Obu Umuagana. The mark of his grave is still there. Erim was tall, big-headed with anthill colour. One Ezea Onenyi from Amankpo claimed to have seen the skull. He described it to be enormous. According to him the skull was brought out by frequent erosion on the axis where the grave situates. This physical feature can be seen when he appears as Odo masquerade.

It can be observed that it is only Amankpo community who can shoot cannon guns all night during Egorigo and Okikpe Odo festivals. It is a trait they inherited from their ancestor, Ezikenechi.

Apart from all these, there was also convincing evidence to me that Amankpo took their root from Erim. I could remember when I was a child, we followed Erim Odo masquerade (not Okikpe but the one with big head) to Amankpo for his usual routine of collecting offerings from his descendants. One Elder Agudu Nwazu poured out praises on Erim as -----“Onyeke muru Igwurube Okotonko, Onyeke muru ndu baa”, and so on. The above praises mean that Erim was a man whose children are like locusts. His descendants are in multiples. The man was correct because Amankpo is just like sand on the seashore.

Chapter Six

The Mystery in Otwa Ejiri

by

Iyi Ochiagha

The word 'Otwa' means a special sacrifice offered only to Ejiri deity by any daughter of Ezike Attah at the deity's groove. The word may be a native of Igala, believed to be the homeland of Ejiri. Every historian in Umuezike suggested that it came with Ezike Attah. He planted the idol at Amaidi-Ohemuje at the beginning of a gully called Okporoko Ejiri. The spot serves as its groove till today. It is called Ishi Ejiri.

The priestly family is the most senior descendant of Ezike Attah. This family is Uwenu-Ezike Orogwo Omeme.

The Two Deities in Ejiri

In the course of history Amankpo Community increased so much in number that they found it discouraging to go to Uwenu-Ezike Orogwo and offer sacrifice to Ejiri. They took one of its paraphernalia (okwo) and constructed their Ejiri deity at Onu Ama. I personally witnessed a similar incident in the '80s when Amadiefioha decided to breakaway and established their Onuekwetfu.

It can be remembered that in the past some factions of Amankpo Community encouraged by her great number tried several times in vain to stop coming to Uwani Otobo to pay the periodical tribute. Each time they wanted to act, the originators of such idea always paid grievously. It is just like any Umuezike man or woman who disregards the sacredness of Onu Ani Ikwere Ezike and decides to talk carelessly there. The ultimate penalty is always death.

The Eligibility

As I said before every daughter of Ezike Attah is qualified for this special sacrifice. When the lot falls on any of the daughters, it is considered as a great honour and favour from Ejiri. The people who will accompany her must get approval from the same god through divination. The husband of the woman has automatic qualification. Majority of those who form the train are drawn from people who strongly doubt the power of the god to make water. Notable

among this group were Emma Nwugwu Otfuete of blessed memory and Malachy Onunze.

Emma had his experience of it before the civil war. I got to know this during one of the meetings of Umuezike Co-operative Farmers in the house of Ogbonna Uwenu in the early seventies. I represented my uncle, Akubue Ochiagha. In the course of the meeting, the issue of Otwa came up, not as one of the agenda, but an argument made it to come up. Emma confirmed it that Ejiri has the power to make water. He quickly added that he declined from eating or drinking the water.

The Day of Sacrifice

There is no limit to the quantity of food prepared or palm wine bought for the sacrifice. Pounded yam forms the main food. The person feeds the entire neighbourhood and even beyond. The people of Amaidi Ohemuje who will come to receive them are also fed.

If the nwada is from Umuezike Uwani, namely Amadiefioha, Uwani Otobo and Uwenu Ezike Orogwo, she will go through the priest of Ejiri Uwenu Ezike Orogwo. If she is from Umuezike Uwenu: Amankpo and Umuobara, she will be led by the priest of Ejiri Amankpo. The oldest man in Uwenu Ezike Orogwo is the priest while it is not so in Amankpo. The oldest man in Umuezike Amoke (the priestly family) is the priest. He may not be the oldest man in Amankpo. It is so because according to another school of history a man from Umuezike Amoke was willingly given the okwo Ejiri by the priest of Ejiri Uwenu Ezike Orogwo. This was to help him take care of Amankpo who came in great numbers to offer sacrifice to Ejiri up to the point that the priest hardly had time to eat. This man from Umuezike Amoke was the first person from Amankpo to arrive for sacrifice that year. The priest of Ejiri Uwenu Ezike Orogwo quickly sacrificed for the man and detached a part of Ejiri deity (okwo Ejiri) and gave him to take care of Amankpo who had as usual started coming in their great numbers. That is why the priestlyhood exclusively remains for the family.

Going to the Groove

About 2pm the company will set off. It is led by the Atama or his representative. Ugwueze Onenyi from Amankpo has in several occasions played this role. The first port of call is a place called Onu Anyaramiyi. There is a giant earthen pot usually inhabited by bees. On approach, the whole

place will be filled with the buzzing sound. The bees will be scattered and flying in different directions.

At the cry of 'elee' three times by the leader, the bees instead of being more aggressive will miraculously settle into the pot. The worshippers will then offer the first sacrifice there, eat and drink.

Entering the Groove Proper

As they step into the groove, the leader will make another eerie shout of 'elee'. He follows it with a plea to the god to keep its servants and agents at peace, so that his children can offer the sacrifice. As the leader is still praying one hears different foot steps sounding like those of human and inhuman entities round about the groove. At this point the leader will warn the curious ones that whatever anybody sees should not be said.

The assembly will then sit on improvised stones with broad smooth surfaces arranged in a semi-circular form. They sit facing numerous earthen pots which extend to as far as the eyes can reach. The biggest one in front has a lid. There is also a smaller one by its side with a tiny hole as its mouth. The mouth seems as if it cannot enter the smallest finger.

The leader uses his hand to dust as many pots as he can reach, turning each of them mouth-down. This action is to prove that there was no water put in any of the pots in advance.

The Mystery

When he has finished this, he starts the invocation with some incantations. As he prays he pours much of the palm wine in front of him before the biggest pot. He takes the largest kolanut and places it on the mouth of the smaller pot which has a finger-like hole. As he continues with prayers all eyes are on the biggest pot which its surface is covered with funaria (eji utobo). The gaze does not last before one starts to see water oozing from the surface of the biggest pot in front. The ooz indicates the level of water from the bottom of the pot. When the oozing comes to the brim the lid floats. Once water reaches the brim, it stops. It does not overflow to the point of dropping on the ground. As that one is going on the large kolanut miraculously drops into the finger-hole like mouth of the small pot.

The leader will first of all reach to the pot, raise the lid, fetch and drink the ice-cold water. The company will then do the same as they eat the food. Other

numerous pots are also filled with water. The water is also used in washing and boiling the goat slaughtered for the sacrifice.

A Successful Otwa

When it happens as described above, the nwada will raise her voice in praises to Ejiri. The god has accepted her sacrifice. The spiritual interpretation is that she is living an upright life. There were cases in the past where the god over showered blessings to the sacrificers. The water after filling all the earthen pots went on to fill all the plates used in carrying food. That was a mark of righteousness on the part of the sacrificers. At request, some of the women are given the water to bathe right on the spot.

A Failed Otwa

If after the invocation from the leader or the priest, the water fails to flow, it is interpreted as evil. The god has not accepted the sacrifice. When this happens the woman usually finds it difficult to hold her emotion. She will burst into crying, lamenting and wailing. The alternative to get water is for her to go to Omu Ohemuje, a nearby spring on top of the hill to fetch water.

A case of this nature happened not in the distance past. It involved the wife of Ozungwa Ezea, a business guru from Ama-eta Ofienyi. She is Iyiukwu Ezeamagu from Amankpo. Ozungwa as a wealthy man provided so much for the great sacrifice. He appointed Odo Diovu his kinsman to represent him. Odo came with his calabash of palm wine to drink from it. In addition he fetishly fortified himself with a talisman which he extracted from Orogo Musical Troupe. That was the error.

The god was unhappy with such a diabolical man to come to his altar. Instead of water flowing. It was a python that had no head or tail that occupied the biggest pot. This happened in 1972.

Also in one of the years in the '80s, Ejiri rejected a sacrifice involving the entire Umuezike. It happened that suddenly domestic animals were being devoured of by a mysterious tiger. This happened around Ohemuje and Umuezike. When an enquiry was made Ejiri owned up that it was behind the attack. The god complained that its worshippers had abandoned it.

To appease the god, Umuezike immediately prepared a sacrifice. On that day Ugwueze led the worshippers as usual. Notable among them were Ani

Nworiaku, Ezeamugwu Okenyi and the wife of Okwoja Dinwoke who cooked and carried the food.

At the cry of 'elee' as they approached the groove, they heard different kinds of sounds they never heard in their lives. One of them sounded as if a large branch of tree fell from the top into the gully. The whole environment shook. Even Ani Nworiaku, a courageous man was greatly frightened as he asked his cousin, Ezeamugwu whether they were save. As they were about to recover, eerie and chilling noises followed. The noises came from all directions and non-stop. Trembling with fear, Ugwueze could not muster the courage to cry another 'elee'. Finally, they decided to hurriedly offer the sacrifice where they were. They could not get to the groove. They had no appetite to eat or thirst to drink.

Their offence; they committed the error of taking along a non-daughter of Ezike Attah. That was Okwoja Dinwoke's wife from Nua.

Can the Mystery weaken the Christian Faith?

There is no reason going into the argument of whether the mystery is true or not. At least two Christians had witnessed it. Emma Nwugwu Otfuete witnessed a successful Otwa and Malachy Onunze saw a failed Otwa. These are two trustworthy fellows who can hardly tell lies even if they have something to gain from doing so.

This cannot affect our Christian faith. Principalities and powers exist but they are all under the power of God (Col.1:16). Remember the encounter between Pharaoh's magicians and Moses the servant of God. Remember the witch of Edom who was able to invoke the ghost of Samuel. Remember the slave girl who prophesied that Paul was a great man of God. Remember the evil Bemuda Triangle. All these powers exist but can only lead the unbelievers to worship untrue gods.

If Pharaoh's magicians were so powerful why did their snakes be swallowed by Moses' snake? If the slave girl was so powerful why did the power of prophecy leave her immediately Paul rebuked the spirit? If Ejiri has the power to make water why should it be restricted only to its worshippers? God created everything to benefit both His worshippers and non-worshippers.

There are several pseudophilatropists in the form of idols, fetish priests, the occult and even right inside the church. They are servants of the devil moving to and fro looking for souls to entice.

Chapter Seven

The Introduction of yam into Aku

by

Gerald Okwor

Fijioku is one of the most celebrated festivals in Aku town. It ranks second to Odo feast and is practised by Christians and traditionalists alike.

Origin

Fijioku feast came at the instance of introduction of yam into Aku. Yam was formerly strange and unfamiliar to an Aku man until it was integrated into his cultural values by an accident of history. It was first, introduced by one wealthy man who happened to be well travelled. Today, Fijioku Feast takes 8-9 days to be completed after which Aku people are free to make the first yam harvest, grace other feasts with yam and sell and buy same.

How Yam first came into Aku.

About 18th century, there lived one Ezike Ukpocha from Umuito in Uwani-Otobo. He was good in making discoveries and adventures. He had a friend named Odoju from Obimo, a town northwest of Aku. They used to invite each other to come and witness the arrival or departure of either Odo masquerade of Aku or Omabe masquerade of Obimo. When Ezike Ukpocha was invited by his friend for Omabe masquerade feast, he made a maximum use of it. As he sat in his host's reception hall, he saw from where he was sitting substances that look like roots of trees being peeled and cut into pieces. They were boiled immediately, pounded and rolled into a large bolus. He was finally surprised to see the same thing being served before him as food. He was reluctant to eat it until his host explained to him the quality of the food.

When they finished eating and drinking, they left for the village square where they were to watch the masquerade perform. While they were there, Ezike was very conscious of what might happen to his stomach when the food became fully digested. Nothing happened rather he began to feel stronger and sound. Before they went to bed that night, Ezike asked his friend questions on how to grow that food. He explained every step starting from clearing of bushes to the time of tying the yam in the barn. He later took him to where he kept many tubers of yam.

When Ezike asked his host to give him some of the tubers to carry home and plant, he regretted that their custom never allowed them to give the yams to visitors. When they went to bed, Ezike's eyes were closed but he was not sleeping. He was full of thought on how to have such quality food in his house. Deep into the night, he sneaked out of the house and went straight to the compost where he saw his friend's wife deposit the yam peels and the heads the previous day. He quickly filled a good number of the yam heads into his goat skin bag.

At the first cock crow, he got up and told his friend that he was to leave immediately. He resisted all pleas by his host to wait till dawn. To discourage him, Odoju told him that it was dangerous to travel at that early hour of the morning. He promised him of another round of hot pounded yam if he could wait till the morning. What Ezike had in his goat skin bag was more important to him than the whole feast and the dangers he might encounter on his way.

When he came back to his house, he quickly kept the heads of the yams in a humid spot at his backyard (ezoka); waiting for the next planting season. When he planted them the first year, there was a bumper harvest. So he disclosed his discovery to his people, Uwani-Otobo by inviting them to his house. After they were all fed with pounded yam, he gave each of them some seed yams to plant. It was an Eke market day.

The following year, he invited Uwani Otobo again. After eating he told his kinsmen, Uwani-Otobo that it would be proper to invite the rest of Umuezike and Aku. So he did the next Eke market day. He was supported by his kinsmen. All came to his house that day with mounds of pounded yam and goods soup. When the representatives of Umuezike gathered at Uwani-Otobo, it was an Umuobara man that mustered the courage to eat the pounded yam first. The rest before this action were afraid of the strange food.

The third Eke market day, the whole Aku people were invited. They were given the same treatment as was given to Umuezike. At the end of the feast seed yams were also distributed to the representatives of different villages in Aku.

That was how Fijioku, the god of yam and the king of all crops came to be celebrated yearly in Uwani-Otobo by the entire Aku people. And this discovery by Ezike Ukpocha made Umuezike to be the priest of Fijioku in Aku.

When Ezike Ukpocha later died, he left behind his first and only son, Ishienyi and Ezike Ukpocha's younger brother, Okpe. It happened that Ishienyi who inherited his father's wealth was slow in thinking and could not make gain each time he went to market to sell. So his uncle, Okpe took over the selling for him. Many cheats in Aku were not happy with Okpe for denying them the continuous opportunity to cheat Ishienyi. They quickly coined a derogatory phrase to hurt Okpe's feeling and mock Ishienyi. That is why when somebody is too forward in a matter that does not directly concern him, you hear the aggrieved person calling him/her 'Okpe na-erer' Ishienyi'. This literally means 'Okpe who sells for Ishienyi'.

Amabokwu, an arch rival of Umuezike however went wild because Umuezike has made such an important discovery. They took it as a challenge to discover another crop that would be superior to yam. They eventually ended up in discovering water yam (abana), the most inferior species of yam. The funny side of the story was that Amabokwu did not invite Aku as Umuezike did. To pay them back for such selfishness, Aku coined a mockery song against Amabokwu. Hence the song 'Oriri Amabokwu, onu ha onu ha', meaning that Amabokwu people do not share their goodies with outsiders. Umuezike added more fun to it by calling them, Amabokwu ori abana ebe. This means that Amabokwu does not only eat water yam but the one infested by beetle.

Yam continued to thrive and grow in Aku till about early 1940s when all of a sudden it ceased to grow and yield good tubers. Aku people were going to Aho Eshzi in Opi and Nkwo Ike Ozara to purchase yam for consumption. Aku people cried out that it was a disgrace for a whole population of Aku to depend on the little communities in the east (Igbo Uwenu) for feeding; for yam had become a staple food in Aku by then. Umuezike took up the responsibility of finding out what had gone wrong. After consulting the god of yam, shwujioku and placating it as it demanded, Ezea Nnadi (the father of Benze) from Uwani Otobo volunteered to go to Aho Eshzi and perform the final ritual.

He gathered akpaka leaves and left in the early morning of Aho market day. When he got there he went straight to the centre of the market and threw the leaves three times on the ground. Each time he threw the leaves he would ask shwujioku to follow him home. At the final count, he tied the leaves into a bunch, carried it on his head and started coming home. Nobody in the market knew what he did.

Immediately he got to Amaezike Onochite in Ohemuje he started releasing his emotion through Igara praise song. Any person he called starting from Ohemuje to Umuezike he would tell him that he had brought yam back (Ezea ajulata shwujioku). After that, yam began to thrive in Aku again.

It was not a mere accident of history but a divine blessing that another Umuezike man again discovered and brought in the most superior species of yam, nwopoko or aba. The person was Amukworu Ezeamagu from Amankpo. This was in the early 1960s when he went for a medical treatment in the University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital, Enugu. When he was recovering from the sickness, it happened that he strolled into the Ogbete market. He saw a particular species of yam that looked different from the ones he knew. He asked some questions about it and got satisfying answers from the sellers. When he was finally discharged, he bought the seedlings, brought them home and planted in his Opanda farm. There was a rich harvest the following year. It was discovered that it has fine flavour, richer in starch and produces bigger tubers than the former ones like eyebe, adaka, arafu, obiar', ukomuri etcetera that came before it. Farmers from all parts of Aku and even beyond trooped into Amukworu Ezeamagu's barn to procure the seedlings.

The Religion in Shwujioku

Before the planting season starts, Uwani Otobo will first of all consult the god of yam to choose the person who will make the first heap and sow seed yam in it. The person it chooses will make feast the day of the first planting. After that the farmers can begin to plant.

The lot fell on me in 1964 when I was an infant. My father took me to a particular farm stead called gwogwoo in Ugwunimbo Uwani-Otobo farm settlement. He held my two hands onto a hoe and with these he made a heap. He picked a seedling and put into my hands and helped me drive it inside the heap.

From that day I fell sick till the harvest season. There was a bumper harvest that year in all crops especially yam. It has never been like that till today. This was because I was an infant and infants have pure hearts. The following year Chief Ezeagu Attah told Uwani Otobo that there was no need consulting the god of yam that I, Iyi Ochiagha should be making the first planting for them. They all accepted but my uncle, Odo Nwani quickly rejected it and asked Ezeagu Attah his contributions when I was sick.

We do not plant yam and cassava together. A woman can make a heap of yam but does not sow. We do not remove already sown seed yams by anybody even if the spot is in dispute (ikpa ji). It is an abomination. Odo masquerade does not enter into a yam farm. Umuezike does not eat a new yam until the new yam festival is celebrated. Any old yam stock seen after the new yam celebration is usually destroyed by Umuezike in Eke Aku market.

NOTE: The above article was originally published in Diawa Voice, 1993 by Gerald Okwor (late). It is much compressed here, and some other information added by me, Iyi Ochiagha.

Chapter Eight

The Making of a King

by

Iyi Ochiagha

It happened that since the inception of Ojiyi festival, different age grades in the entire Aku usually went to Orié Uwenu to fire their local guns in commemoration of the feast. In about the year 1922, Chief Ugwu Manu Idikwuogu, the paramount ruler of Aku then decreed that such practice should stop; that is the shooting of guns at Orié Uwenu. He gave no convincing reason for such a decree.

All the other twelve villages in Aku complied except Umuezike. Different age grades in Umuezike came to Orié Uwenu as usual, demonstrated and fired as many shots as they could and left. There came Elder Nwadi Ochieka from Amankpo. He was decked in his full regalia (as ozo titled man) with costly ornaments like 'akha' beads making several coils round his neck. On his head was a white feather from eagle. His appearance on the scene attracted the attention of the crowd who were there waiting for the arrival of Ojiyi. He walked majestically around the whole length and width of Orié Uwenu, throwing his gun up in the air and catching it again. Finally, he fired it before the face of Chief Ugwu Manu. This increased the Chief's anger. Immediately the chief ordered young men from Lelegu to seize the gun from Nwadi. At the end, not only his gun was seized but he was totally stripped of the regalia.

When this news got home, it was interpreted as an insult not to Nwadi as a person, but the entire Umuezike. This was not the first time he insulted Umuezike. The whole of Umuezike people were immediately summoned at Onu Ani Ikwere Ezike to decide on what to do. As consultation was going on, Nwadi stayed back at Lelegu. He refused to come home. When it was night and darkness fell everywhere, he tiptoed into the palace of the Chief through the backyard that had no door. He went right into the place where his gun and beads were kept. At this time, the Chief and his entire household were in slumber. Nwadi collected not only his but also other valuables the Chief had been seizing from people.

As Umuezike were still holding their meeting that went deep into the night, Nwadi returned and dropped all that he gathered from the Chief's house before the

assembly. This action was greeted with shouts of joy and triumph by the people. Hundreds of cannon guns were loaded and fired till day break as a mark of victory. When it was day, the Chief discovered what had happened. He immediately suspected it was Nwadi and sent a message telling him to send all those items back or face a drastic measure. Nwadi simply ignored his bluffing; knowing that nothing would happen. And nothing actually happened.

Umuezike later gathered subsequently and finally decided they would have their paramount ruler, never to be under Chief Ugwu Manu Idikwuogu again. Then Ugbonabo Chinevu from Amankpo was immediately put forward, but his father objected to it. After several candidates had been nominated and declined for one reason or the other, the whole Umuezike with one voice asked Uwani-Otobo to give them a candidate. After several consultations by Uwani-Otobo people, Ugwu Ishihe was finally presented in absentia. He was like the Biblical David, far away from home but kingship waiting for him in the house. There was a great ovation for choosing him.

After this, the next problem facing the people was to finance the project. Getting a warrant at that time involved heavy money. "Who will bell the cat?" The people cried out. Immediately Nwodo Nwezeamagu came forward. He asked Umuezike to follow him to his house. They went together and dug up some bundles of money in 'echi' currency. He presented these to the people as his own widow's mite. Then Umuezike people praised him as 'Egbe na-etichu ugu', the gun that instigates people into action.

This gesture initiated by Nwodo Nwezeamagu inspired many others into action. Enyivuek' Oti, Obodoagu Oti, Agbowu Nwenyi, all from Amankpo and a host of others donated heavily to the project. When Didigwu Ishienyi from Amadiefioha saw this, he sent his son, Edoga to his house. The young man returned, depositing an amount that drowned any other contribution, there was a great ovation. Praises were coming from all directions, calling him 'Didigwu Ishienyi Nwito, miyi na-anyi oku'. This means that he was the water that quenches fire. Apart from these heavy donors, every age grade in Umuezike was taxed a certain amount. For example the age of Ozor Nwamadi (then a mere toddler) was asked to contribute two 'mkpara echi' each. Their equivalent value by the time of writing this book was two thousand naira.

Umuezike then sent for Ugwu Ishihe who was residing at Igbo-Oda. He never knew what was going on. He came back in the night the same day the message got to him and the whole arrangement was made known to him. He accepted to

serve his people and remove the reproach Chief Ugwu Manu Idikwuogu had brought upon them in particular.

When everything was put in place Umuezike appointed bright young men and elders to accompany Ugwu Ishihe with the money to Nsukka to meet the colonial administrator of the District. The group was led by Matthew Ishihe; an educated young man. They set out at midnight, taking Aku-Adada-Nkpologwu route. Before six o' clock the following morning, they were well seated at the office of the colonial District Officer.

Hardly did the D.O. sit down for the day's work when they put forward the matter through their chief spokesman, Mr Matthew Ishihe. Then with the help of Igwurube Diyoke Eshu from Amadiefioha and his friend, one Mr Nzegwu who was the court clerk, the proposal was accepted without delay. He asked Matthew to introduce the candidate. Ugwu Ishihe was then called to stand. When the D.O. saw him stand, towering to the sky, he smiled and nodded in acceptance. Taking the money, he immediately wrote the warrant certificate declaring Ugwu Ishihe Omukwu as a Chief. He was on the spot decked in full regalia. The team that accompanied him followed it with *igara* praises and those of them who were Ozo titled members used their ***Opu ozara*** in rendering praises to Ezechukwuoke Abiama who had made it possible. This was on 8th of August 1922.

When they returned home later that day, there was jubilation galore as the entire Aku people saw Ugwu Ishihe decorated in chieftaincy attire. As usual, Umuezike started firing their cannon guns to usher in a new king. The following day Chief Ugwu Ishihe assumed office at his Palace, Onu-Ofu in Uwani-Otobo. People from all parts of Aku including Nuavillage, the place of Chief Ugwu Manu Idikwuogu trooped into the Palace of Chief Ugwu Ishihe Omukwu seeking for justice that had been denied them by Chief Manu.

Then elder Enyivuek' Oti quipped before the assembly of Umuezike that Chief Ugwu Manu Idikwuogu was no more Nwonyekeanyi but Nwamanu. This was because people revered his name that they resorted to calling him Nwonyekeanyi. So, Enyivuek' Oti told people that the Chief had been stripped of that immunity. The same even affected his son who took over from him. Majority of Aku people simply called him 'Nwamanu' instead of Chief Manu.

The following year, 1923 was an Odo masquerade year. Umuezike appeared at the scene of Ovuru-Uzo Odo in a more flamboyant colour, carrying their usual large and newly made local hand-fans. As it had been in the past years,

they were the cynosure of all eyes. They sang as they walked around in opulent deportment:

'Ta-anu, ta-anu,
Ta-anu, eshiene'

Which means today, today, -----today is great; referring to what the Lord has done to them by giving them a chief.

At intervals, Umuezike would follow it up by resorting to poking fun on their arch rivals, Amabokwu people who had started earlier to give dirty blows to them. They sang calling Umuezike a lineage of unserious people (Itarigba nwhu or eshue).

Then Umuezike replied dismissing Amabokwu as a group of little children; a people who lack matured men from generation to generation (Ogba umurimu umu).

Umu-o, Umuezike,
Okanigwo, ka-je n'lkwu Ama,
Onye ejine, ewu Ejiri anyi,
Onye akpa laa, ewu Ejiri anyi,
Je eji eji, jiri Amabokwu,
Je akpa akpa, kpara Amabokwu,

The above song explained how Amabokwu challenged Umuezike to a combat despite all the warning from Umuezike that they were still little children. They were further warned that if they insist on challenging Umuezike anyone who would be thrown or captured would automatically be a sacrificial goat to the Ejiri deity of Umuezike. As it has been predicted, Amabokwu fell captive at the end.

In fact to watch Amabokwu and Umuezike exchange jokes is the most interesting aspect of Aho Ovoruzo Odo festival. It reached a climax during the time of Igbonekwu Dimeze from Uwani-Otobo.

Chief Ugwu Ishihe died in 17th, July 1941

The role of Okoro Diovu (alias chukwu oke Ugwu Ishihe) in the life of Chief Ugwu Ishihe

Ugwu Ishihe Omukwu was a man of great influence even before he was made a paramount ruler. Not only was he physically a giant, but a giant in the areas

of oratory and wisdom. He was known to have travelsled far and wide and acquired much knowledge. Being an amiable man he had made several friends within and outside Aku. He did not put into consideration age and social status when making friends. The old and young, poor and rich were his friends. He was at Igbo-Oda for example visiting some of his friends when his people needed his service.

He had a servant who was also a close associate. The person was Okoro Diovu from Amadiefioha. His advice and role in the life of the hero came to limelight when two of them went to Igbo-Oda in honour of an invitation to a feast. After serving them with pounded yam and a bowl of soup full of attractive lumps of meat, the Chief immediately wanted to descend on them. Okoro quickly held him back and asked their host the kind of meat in the soup served to them. The two were shocked to hear it was meat from dog. When the Chief came back from his temporal shock, he turned admirably to his lieutenant and exclaimed: "Okoro Diovu, chukwuoke Ugwu Ishihe Omukwu!" This means that Okoro Diovu was his personal god. He knew that his servant had saved him from eating condemnation and death. This is because Uwani-Otobo people especially the descendants of Ajogwu Anugwu do not eat any meat from dog. It is believed it kills and at the same time makes its victim to lose his burial rites. It therefore becomes unimaginable for a legend like Chief Ugwu Ishihe to die and be buried like a day old baby.

Since that incident, the wise axe-headed and unmarried Okoro Diovu became famous. Praise-singers (Ogba Igara) praised him as Okoro Diovu Amuka, Okoro Dinwoke Nwasa, chukwuoke Ugwu Ishihe. It is good to remember that Okoro Dinwoke Nwasa, the father of Ochiagha Okoro from Uwani-Otobo was the maternal grandfather and godfather of Okoro Diovu.

Chief Ugwu Ishihe himself specifically played and sang about the incident in his Ubo music as a melody:

Okoro Diovu Amuka,
Okoro Idenyi Amenyi,
Okoro Dinwoke Nwasa,
Ugonoma Iyoke,

Ugonoma ad'g' ike ogu, na-elere egbe enya,
Chukwuoke Ugwudike Okagu, Okagu, Ogoro Onyenigbo (Ugwu Ishihe).

This was copied by praise singers and sang during festivities and even as a dirge in funerals.

Another school of thought has it that the above statement was rather made when one of the wives out of envy set fire on the Chief's house suspecting him to have gone to bed with one of the other wives. Unfortunately for the woman Okoro Diovu caught her in the act and raised alarm that woke the Chief and the entire neighbourhood.

Chapter Nine

The Voice of Ikwere Ezike,

A correction of some published historical Errors as pertaining Umuezike

by

Iyi Ochiagha

Prologue

I thank the Almighty God for giving me this opportunity to correct some of the errors in historical writes-up and even public speeches, which a certain school of thought has been creating on Umuezike. What I shall be doing in this text is to be showing its perceptions of Umuezike, then analyse them, and present the truth as they are in order to write history as history not as a story. Majority of this historical distortion came from Okikpe Magazine, volume 1, 1974. Notwithstanding the wrong impressions on Umuezike as a people in that book, I have high regards for all the contributors especially the editor-in-chief. I thank them for their effort to document for the first time the history of our people. Amongst other things, it serves as a launching pad for any other historical research on Aku.

First, the explanation given on how Umuezike became the Chief Priests of 'Fijioku' was wrong. It was said that 'Ezike, the father of Umuezike village was therefore an Igala man who accompanied Diawa to Aku and was in charge of Diawa's farms. Because he was in charge of Diawa's farms, Umuezike people are the chief priests of Fijioku (god of fertility) in Aku', (L.O. Ocho, 1974 Okikpe vol.1, second to the last paragraph in page three). It is correct to say that Ezike Attah was an Igala man. Other claims were wrong. Ezike Attah neither accompanied Diawa to Aku nor in charge of his farms. In fact they did not know each other neither did they come to Aku at the same period. Ezike Attah was a descendant of one of the Attahs on or before 8th or 9th century A.D. He came to Aku on or before 8th or 9th century A.D. This was the time according to Dr Tom Miachi when Igala culture had already influenced that of Igbo Ukwu and other communities in Igbo land. Diawa in the other hand came possibly to Aku in the middle of seventeenth century when according to L.O. Ocho, 1974 Okikpe Vol. 1, Igala power was in the ascendancy in Nsukka area.

Ezike Attah was a prince not just an ordinary Igala man. Diawa was an administrator sent by the emperor in the person of the then Attah. Ezike Attah fought his way to Aku hence the meaning of his name, powerful king. He did not accompany any person. Again, Attah was in those days like the Emperor of old Roman Empire and Diawa like Pontius Pilate, the governor of Juda at the time of Christ. Caesar would not have sent his son to accompany Pilate to Juda only for his son to end up being in charge of Pilate's farms. It is unnatural. The superior does not serve the subordinate. The son of Caesar was superior to Pilate whose appointment as a Prefect could be terminated at any time. Likewise, Ezike Attah as a prince of Attah, the ruler of Igala land and all the territories under him would not have accompanied an inferior officer under his father's command to finally become a servant in a farmland when he was a commander (Eze-ike).

Furthermore, following the story in Okikpe magazine 1974 volume 1, Umuezike would not have been the right people to be the Chief Priests of Fijioku but Ohemuje, the direct descendants of Diawa. A servant does not become an heir to his master but the son of the master. Moses, upon all his achievement in the house of God remained a servant. It was Jesus whom God declared as His son (Matt.3:17) and a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek (Heb.7:17).

The true story of Umuezike people becoming the Chief Priests of Fijioku was that Ezike Ukpocha from Uwani-Otobo in Umuezike was the first person to bring yam into Aku. He planted it and when he had harvested it, he decided to show his kinsmen (Aku people) his new discovery (Gerry Okwor, Fijioku Festival in Aku, as published in the Diawa Voice, April 1993). Not every village in Aku was invited at the feast (Oku Fijioku). The villages that were invited have been the members of Oha Aku right from the beginning. The claim that not every village in Aku was a member of Oha was confirmed by the British Colonial Intelligence Report on Igbodo, Barmby J. (ADO, 1934). Mr J. Barmby had listed the Oha in Ugulala (Ugwunani) amongst other villages in Aku for example as Ameti, Uhuedi (Uhuede) Amoji (Amoze) and Umuneli (Umuneri). Even till today, during the Oku Fijioku festival, the roll call still insists on the above four villages from Ugwunani.

'The members of Oha were not happy the way Ojiyi hijacked the politics and ruling of the town. So they decided to defy the Ojiyi power by attending the meeting called by Okite Ogbonna from Ofienyi,' (L.O.Ocho, 1974 Okikpe Vol. 1 page 16). It was strictly the member villages of this Oha that were invited by

Okite Ogbonna. The members felt duty bound to redeem the town from the whims of Ojiyi.

The other group, which Okikpe Magazine called Second Oha (Oha Ugwuaka) was never invited in such decision making of the community. It was not as a result of not attending the meeting called by Okite Ogbonna for fear of Ojiyi as Okikpe magazine volume 1 suggested. They were simply not members of Oha so they were not invited. It was not because of the fear of Ojiyi as Okikpe Magazine made us believe that this Second Oha failed to attend the meeting as the agenda of the meeting were not made known to any of the people invited as to decide whether to stay off. It was the type of meeting which Aku people call 'Osheneka'. That is to say the convener determines those he invites. So Okite Ogbonna selected only the members of First Oha. It was not for all and sundry (ololodidigbo) as it is today in Aku General Assembly.

It was in protest for not being allowed into the mainstream of Aku leadership and decision making that the Second Oha was formed. It is the member villages of this very group that are not invited even till now during the 'Oku Fijioku' festival.

The following villages in addition to the four from Ugwunani are invited to 'Fijioku' festival: Use, Agumoha Mgboko, Amegu Uwani, Ezeani, Umudimotfue, Umu-Ugwuocha and Umu-Atama in Owere Mgboko. Others are Amaogbo, Umuli, Umudimgada, Ebo and Uwani Amabokwu. All the villages in Umuezike are invited because they are all members of Oha. In Ohemuje we have Amegu Uwani, Amaezike and Uhueke in Amaidi. We have Ukwuvuru and Uwenu Ofienyi invited. In Obie: Umuohagwu, Amauwenu, and Umuori are invited. In Amogwu: Amegu Amogwu, Amaechem, Umuejegwo and Uwani-Aram come for Fijioku festival. We invite from Nua: Umudiyoke Ugwu in Lelegu, Uhuezikorum in Umundikwu, Ndi Okwuruoka in Onyagbada and Umuezikenechi in Ebokwe. Uwani-Ezike and Ebo-Uwani are invited from Oshigo. Umuoma in Uwani Oda is invited from Oda. Ugwuegede like Use and Umuezike are invited as a whole.

Please readers should understand me that this piece is not intended to undermine any village in Aku or promote any above the other. After all we are all members of Aku General Assembly today. It is intended rather to correct distorted history in Okikpe Magazine volume 1 1974 on how Umuezike became the priests of Fijioku.

The writer of that piece in Okikpe should have taken time to at least interview any of the heads of the mentioned villages on how Umuezike became the Chief Priests of Fijioku. This would have been a good alternative of getting the correct information if Umuezike elders were considered daft beyond words and not worthy of devoting the writer's precious time by way of interviewing any of them. This is because, as one of the rituals during the feast, the story on how Ezike Ukpocha brought the yam is recited. I believe none of the heads of the invited villages would tell that Umuezike became the Chief Priests of Fijioku because Ezike Attah, the father of Umuezike was in charge of Diwea's farms.

I have been in the Palace of Attah of Igala in my quest to know Ezike Attah's root. I have seen the very spot our ancestor took off, not as a slave or servant but a master on adventure. I have seen also an archaic watch tower constructed with mud. It has four windows facing the four cardinal points. They were used in those days of inter-tribal wars to spot any invading force. They stopped me from taking a photograph of it. It was explained to me that it is forbidden right from the beginning. According to the Secretary of Attah Allahji Aliyu Obaje, the tower is over two hundred years old by his calculation.

It was said in the same page three of Okikpe Magazine that Fijioku means the god of fertility. The translation as god of fertility means that Ezike Attah was busy throughout his stay with Diwea carrying animal dung, ashes, and dry grasses (ekarika) in order to fertilize the soil. Fijioku is not the god of fertility but the god of yam. 'Fijioku' by all interpretation remains the god of yam, and yam is the chief of all crops and treated with honour in the entire Igbo land, the honour, which the translator probably did not want to go to Umuezike. In conclusion, Umuezike people are not the Chief Priests of god of fertility but god of yam. That is why during the 'Oku Fijioku' festival, no other food is served but pounded yam with egusi soup only (the type usually prepared during ozo title-taking ceremony). It was not a mere coincidence that in the early 1960s another Umuezike man by name Amukworu Ezeamagu from Amankpo brought the most superior species of yam into Aku. This particular yam is called 'aba' or 'nwopoko'. It immediately displaced other inferior types like: arafu, adaka, nkwocha, ukomuri, obiar', eyerebe and others.

It was said in the same Okikpe of 1974 Volume 1 page 14 that: "one of the first decisions taken by the Aku Assembly was to pass sanctions against the former allies of the Igala occupation force. These were the people of Umuezike village who claimed that the Igala people were blood relations.

They were forbidden to participate in the meetings of Aku people. Marriage contracts were forbidden between them and the rest of the town. Umuezike decided to give away their daughters to influential members of the community without asking for any bride prize. Influential members were bribed in various other ways and within a short time, Umuezike people were once more accepted into the Aku fold”.

There was no period in the history of Aku when Umuezike people were sanctioned. There was actually the period of Igala’s constant attacks on Aku and other Igbo communities. The other claims about the aftermath of the Igala war with regards to Umuezike were not true. These false claims like others before them again made me to go into a serious research on Igala wars and the negative impacts on the people of Umuezike. It can be recalled that it has earlier been written in page three of same book that Ezike Attah accompanied Diawa to Aku in the seventeenth century. It was repeated in page eleven that the establishment of Igala hegemony was about the middle of the seventeenth century to about the beginning of the eighteenth century. It was about this time according to the story that Ezike Attah accompanied Diawa to Aku. Let us remember that a century is a hundred years. Half a century is fifty years. So from the middle of seventeenth century to the beginning of eighteenth century should be about fifty years. It was within these fifty years that Diawa ruled Aku. Ezike Attah was with him as a farm attendant, following the same story. By the end of this period of fifty years Diawa defected (not deflected, correction please), married from Aku and started peopling Ohemuje. The Igala hegemony collapsed. The Aku people resumed their former system of government. That was the time the axe of sanctions fell on the people of Umuezike.

Going by the above claims it means that the people of Umuezike were not in existence during this period of Igala hegemony. Their father Ezike Attah as a servant in the farms of Diawa would not have married before his master. For Diawa married at the beginning of eighteenth century when Igala hegemony collapsed. Even if Ezike Attah had married before coming to Aku in the middle of seventeenth century, he would not have produced a population like Umuezike at that time which allied with Igala soldiers, while he remained attending to Diawa’s farms. There is a contradiction in the whole story. It might be that Umuezike the children of Ezike Attah had migrated from Igala to Aku years before their father came with Diawa in the middle of seventeenth century. But this is not possible. The cart does not go before the horse. If Ezike Attah came with Diawa, it means that there was no village like

Umuezike which has been taking part in the cultural activities of the town and was sanctioned after the Igala war.

Let us do some mathematical calculation here: Ezike Attah according to Okikpe volume 1, 1974 came to Aku in the middle of seventeenth century-----probably 1650, which is about 360 years ago. This was just about the time of my sixth ancestor, Ike Ideke Omega. He became the father of Nwasa Ike. Thus, Nwasa Ike was the father of Dinwoke Nwasa and Ezugwu Nwasa. Dinwoke Nwasa in turn became the father of Okoro Dinwoke. Okoro Dinwoke fathered Ochiagha Okoro. Ochiagha Okoro was the father of Anibueze Ochiagha (Ani Nwokoro) who is my father. That is if they lived an average of sixty years each. Ogbonna Nwugwu, the oldest man in Uwani-Otobo at the time of this writing is about a hundred years old. Does it mean that between the time Ezike Attah came to Aku and the time this man was born was just 260 years? Three hundred and sixty years ago would be just the time of his great grandfather. For his lineage is specially blessed with longevity. Ezikoro Erim, Ezike Erim and Ezikenechi Erim, the fathers of Uwani Otobo and Amankpo had even lived before this time Okikpe was talking about. The three men above were the sons of Erim and Erim a descendant of Ikwere Ezike and Ikwere Ezike was the son of Ezike Attah.

Ezike Attah came to Aku long before the coming of Diawa. He came probably before or in the eight or ninth century A.D. According to Dr Tom A.Miachi (Introducing Igala people, Golden Jubilee celebration of the enthronement of His Royal Majesty Alh.(Dr) Aliyu O. Obaje, November, 2006) 'the remoteness of the Attah institution has not been properly determined historically but oral tradition and archeological records point to dates around the 8th and 9th century A.D.' The possible influence of the Igala kingship on Nri and Igbo Ukwu cultures, the latter of which has been dated to about 8th and 9th century A.D by Professor C.Thurstan Shaw shows that Igala monarch influenced Igbo Ukwu's as early as that period. It will be suggested that northern Igbo in which Aku, Nsukka and Obimo fall into might have been influenced earlier than the above dates. Ezike Attah might have come to Aku within that period of Igala's early contact with the Igbo. That was how he was able to occupy the most centrally located mass area of land in the Geography of Aku today. Probably that has been the envy of some individuals to the extent of distorting history to disfavour Umuezike at any given opportunity.

Again, the story made mention of former allies of Igala occupation force. One would have expected it to name other allies apart from Umuezike. Unless it

was using the word, 'ally', on every man from Umuezike. Umuezike never allied with Igala soldiers to attack Aku. Our people rather defended Aku by using their blood relationship with Igala. In those days it was Umuobara people in Umuezike that were the warriors. They were to Umuezike what Abam soldiers were to Igbo in the ancient days. They happened to be in possession of a giant hard bell (Oti) believed to have been brought from Igala by Ezike Attah. Each time the Igala soldiers were on rampage, Umuobara would simply dangle the bell in front of them. Whenever the Igala soldiers saw it, they would refrain from attacking the people, knowing that these were their brothers. That was how Ekaboyi, a warrior from Umuobara was sent to Mgboko to defend that axis from the constant Igala invasion. He went carrying the bell. He finally settled permanently there. He peopled a major part of Umudimotfue Mgboko. Presently the bell is with Odo Igbonekwu from Umueshu in Umudimotfue.

I do not think the above behaviour of Umuezike looked like being in alliance with Igala. Umuezike neither killed Aku nor Igala. We rather saved Aku by capitalizing on our blood relationship with the invading soldiers; a wisdom that should be appreciated. Therefore the use of the expression, "former allies" on Umuezike is misleading.

The story went on to say that as a result of being a former ally, Umuezike was sanctioned by the Oha. And I ask: who were the members of Oha at that period? We should remember that Umuezike, Ugwuegede and Use were the only communities who were wholly members of Oha. Others were fractions from other villages. Where was the decision taken? At that time Onu-Igba in Umuneri, Onu Ama in Amankpo and Obu Ezike Ogbonne in Use amongst others were venues more frequently used by Oha (Ezike Amadi, 2000). I wonder the crops of such assembly that would take such decision against Umuezike in her own soil, or in a place encircled by Umuezike.

If the writer did not know it he might have heard about Chief Ugwu Ishihe, Igbonekwu Dimeze and Agu Diarua Onodugo. They were exceptional orators of their periods. Agu Diarua for example had in several occasions taken unilateral decisions for the whole Aku without objection from any quarter. From the very beginning, Umuezike has been producing their likes and even now. So it was highly difficult for the rest of Aku to impose a sanction when men of wisdom, honours and valours abound in Umuezike right from the beginning; unless it was the time of the plutocrat as mentioned in page 23 Okikpe volume 1 (The rule of the plutocrat). Even if it was, we had Didigwu

Ishienyi from Amadiefioha and Enyivuek' Oti from Amankpo amongst others to match wealth with wealth. It is clear that plutocracy could not control the affairs of the town today that materialism is being worshipped as God how much more in those days when people were not after money but good name?

I shall not fail to give a living example on how it would not have been easy for the Assembly to sanction Umuezike at any period in history. Amankpo in Umuezike has for a long time past allowed her Uroko Odo masquerade to make music starting from the evening of Orié day (in defiance to the law of Odo masquerade institution) instead of the early hours of Aho day, yet I have not heard that the hamlet was sanctioned. Then, if it is not easy for Oha to sanction just a hamlet in Umuezike, is it the entire Umuezike community that could be sanctioned?

That was by the way. It was said again in the same paragraph that marriage contracts were forbidden between Umuezike and the rest of Aku. Umuezike decided to give away their daughters to influential men without asking for any bride price.

This claim is very annoying and hard to believe. Even during the Biafra war when Nigeria soldiers were violently taking our girls and women away to rape, I have never seen or heard of a father who easily let-go his daughter even at a gunpoint; an Umuezike man included. Umuezike would not have stooped so low to beg people to take away their daughters without bride price just because of sanction. By that period Umuezike has grown into a large community and has started marrying among themselves. At worst they would make okay with the number of men available for marriage than bringing shame. It is quite unfortunate that the writer as a matter of authenticity could not at least cite an example of a family in Aku produced by such give-away marriage. By the way has the writer never heard about, 'Atu Nwa Attah', a mythical princess of Ezike Attah believed to be precious and costly as gold? That is why even today in Aku when a seller suddenly hikes the price of his goods, the buyers will promptly ask him whether the goods have become the daughter of Attah. An Ezike Attah daughter is highly valued in Aku and was never and will never be given freely to men.

This distortion of history did not only affect Umuezike, but has gone beyond. For example in the history of the Catholic Church in Aku, St James which began as Agbase Primary School in 1922 stood so. But St Gregory's Primary School which began as Orié Akibute Primary School in 1933 and was the

second Catholic Missionary School, Aku was listed last among the first generation schools; using when it was relocated to its present site in 1949. The wrong signal the writer has passed in that Catholic Journal (2000) is that Nua, Obie, Amogwu, Ugwunani, and Oshigo had schools before any existed in Akibute, 'the yam foofoo eaters', the writer would conclude, I think? This is a well calculated outright distortion of history.

In chapter 3 page 13, from the third paragraph of the same Catholic Journal, 2000 'As a follow up of their aims and objectives, outreach centres were founded as catechetical schools at Orié Akibute, Oshigo, Amogwu, Ugwunani, Amabokwu and Ofienyi. These centres steadily grew up as Catholic Religious Mission schools namely:

- ❖ Orié Akibute Primary School 1933 (site taken by Aku Girls).
- ❖ Christ the king school, Ugwunani 1934.
- ❖ St. Partrick's Amogwu 1937.
- ❖ St. John's Oshigo 1941.
- ❖ St. Gregory's school, Ofienyi 1949 (absorbed Orié Akibute Primary school)
- ❖ St. Bernard's Primary School, Mgboko 1977.
- ❖ St. Michael's Primary School, Amabokwu 1984'.

This is not true. St. Gregory's school did not absorb Orié Akibute Primary School. It was shifted to the present location and renamed St. Gregory's Primary School after the permanent structure was constructed. Edoga did it purposely to check the fast spreading of Anglican Church in Aku as St. Thomas was the only school in the centre of the town. So it was just a re-location to the permanent site as Agbase Primary School was shifted to Egbugwu on 5th September 1939 and renamed St. James' Primary School, Aku. If the writer wants to say that St. Gregory's started in 1949, not in 1933, St. James' started also in 1939 not in 1922 and absorbed Agbase's Primary School.

It is good to note that Christ the King School, Ugwunani, St Bernard Primary School, Mgboko and St Michael Primary School, Amabokwu never started as Catholic outreach centres or catechetical schools as claimed in that Journal. They were all later converted and given the names of saints by the Catholic Church which is the dominant faith in Aku. They were not built either through the Missionary or by the Missionary but the communities (Catholics and non-Catholics) where they are located.

For example Ugwunani Primary School started as a Local Authority (L.A) School in 1962. The school was an upshot of Ohemuje County Council's School, which collapsed as a result of a disagreement between Messrs James Isiorji from Amaezike Ohemuje and Alphonsus Ezikeanyi from Ugwunani. Mr. Ezikanyi who was the only teacher in the school was accused by Mr Isiorji of the Anglican Faith of indoctrinating the pupils in the Catholic way. Out of anger, Mr. Ezikanyi left to Ugwunani and started assembling children in a class. This was within 1959/62. That was how "L.A". School started at Ugwunani. As there was no other teacher to replace Mr. Ezikanyi at the County Council's School in Ohemuje, the children scattered and the school stopped. The pillars and debris of the school are still there at Ohemuje. Even Obere County Council School, Amankpo started in 1958 before L.A.

Since 1972 Masses have been celebrated only in St. James' church and St. Gregory's church/school. It was through the efforts of Mr. Godwin Amunabo and others that the Catholic Community and the Parish Priest then were forced to see why Masses should be celebrated in alternation in the two Churches/Schools. I could still remember clearly how Mr Amunabo, Mr Emmanuel Ezeamagu, Mr Vincent Odo (Nwodo Nwezike), Louis Nsude, Pius Enyi, Elias Ugwuudu, Matthew Ishihe, Emmanuel Nwidi and a host of others carried the fight to the Bishop's house at Enugu. In order to put action into their words they started directing us (mainly children) to attend Masses at St. Gregory's Church which they officiated than trekking to Egbugwu, a farther distance. This action of these strong men later yielded fruit. It made the Bishop of Enugu Diocese, His lordship Godfrey Paul Okoye to force the Parish priest into celebrating Masses in St. Gregory.

This was later extended to St. John's Primary School, Oshigo. There was nothing like Christ the King's School, Ugwunani as a Catholic Church till the late 2000s when the Catholics started celebrating Masses there. And subsequently it was given a parish in January 2011 not because of the order of seniority but the ability to gather cash first and make a comfortable home for the priest. Personally, I have never heard such name till August 2008. If actually Christ the King's School, Ugwunani started in 1934 as claimed by the Journal, how was it that it did not have senior primary classes up till mid or late 1970s? I could remember that in the early '70s when I was in the junior primary, pupils from Ugwunani were coming to St. Gregory for their senior primary education. I could still remember that Messrs Peter and Innocent Ezikeanyi and Anthony Oti, all from Ugwunani graduated from St. Gregory in

the early '70s. There was no senior primary in L.A then. Also pupils from Ejuona like James Dike, Basil Oji, Dr George Okagu and others graduated from St.Gregory at the same period mentioned earlier.

When St. Gregory, St. John and L.A were merged and renamed Central School, Aku, St.Gregory was designated as campus One while St. John and L.A. were campuses Two and Three respectively. Why did these two schools agree to take the second and third positions if they actually started before St. Gregory? St. James, St. Thomas and St. Patrick were also merged and called Community School, Aku. St. James was called Campus One for being the oldest, and St. Thomas being Campus Two and St. Patrick, Three.

All the missionary schools in Aku are still called by their old names till today:

- ❖ St. James, Aku
- ❖ St. Thomas, Aku
- ❖ St. Gregory, Aku
- ❖ St. Patrick, Amogwu Aku and
- ❖ St. John, Oshigo

Ugwunani Primary School or Christ the King's School is not in the above list and till today known by every Aku man as L.A.

Therefore, my dear tellers and writers of history, history has to be given a fair judgment by telling and writing it as it happened, not as the writer wills. History does not tell lies but writers/tellers do. History is not a fiction. We should not mind whether the maker was an enemy or considered to be a fool, or coming from an area the writer does not like. We ought not to behave like some historians from Yoruba land who would like to claim that every good aspect of the history of Nigeria was either made by a Yoruba man or happened in Yoruba land. Okikpe volume1 1974 took time to give a full account of for example Ofie Nwaezeado's mastery in trade. It left no detail untouched to the point that one would start to conclude that every Aku man was in darkness till the time of Ofie Nwaezeado. The only thing it probably forgot to add was that George T. Goldie was his trade associate.

It never in the least made any reference to Onumanya Nwaezoyiri Omega, the first trader to introduce coins into Aku (Ezike Amadi, Ejuona Vision 2000). Ezike Amadi quoted Udene Ekwueme (Udene Ugwuoke) a praise singer. And praise singers (Ogba Igara) are great historians. Ani Nwoshinigwe from Uwani Otobo, a great merchant of late 19th and early 20th Centuries A.D. was not mentioned. He was called 'Ozuk' Eru', meaning someone who was as smart

in commerce as Aro Chukwu people. No mention was made of Didigwu Amunabo the first indigenous merchant to buy a moving engine (lorry) in the whole old Nsukka province. He single handedly opened a commercial centre at Ishi Nkporogwu where every Aku man and woman supplied palm kernels to him only. They never allowed any other merchant to buy from them except 'Didigwu Nwanene', as they called him with love. Nothing was also said about Ogbuanya (Ozungwa) Ezea, an astute merchant whose Ozo title name suggested he was an intelligent and fast marketer. There were many great merchants in Aku before and after the time of Ofie Nwaezado.

It is quite unfortunate that Okikpe magazine, the first book that recorded the history of Aku was not painstaking in telling the history of a people like Umuezike. How Umuezike became the priest of Fijioku was told in a most dishonourable way. The same book, which posed itself to be good in detailed history refused to mention the name of the particular Oha Ofie Nwaezado and his friend Udene Diarua led. It only made a vague remark that, Ofie led one section and his friend, Udene Diarua led the other. It was incomplete information. It could have told us which of them led the first Oha or second Oha (Oha Ugwaka). A point of correction still, no one individual was a leader in Oha. It was an assembly made up of representatives (orators) from the member villages. It was a council of wise men with no terminal leader. So it was wrong to say that either Udene Diarua or Ofie Nwaezeado led any Oha.

By all indication, America is the most advanced nation in the world today, yet her professors of history still write that civilization started in Egypt, a third world nation. They never distorted it to favour either U.S.A. or her sister nation, Britain. Likewise Moses, the leader of Israelites and a writer never distorted history to favour his people. For example, he wrote that Noah's ark finally settled on top of mountain Ararat (Gen.8:4) after forty days and forty nights of universal deluge and also hundred and fifty days of being afloat. One would have expected him to write that the ark finally settled on top of mountain Sinai (God's favourite meeting place with Moses). Yet being unbiased, he did not. He wrote also about the enslavement of his people, Israelites by the Egyptians. He did not write that rather the Egyptians were in bondage in Israel to make his past look noble thereby misinforming future generations.

Moses wrote accurately otherwise future discoveries would have proved him wrong. Noah's Ark was found thousands of years after the deluge by Russian air force men flying over mountain Ararat in Turkey during the Second World

War. From the air, they spotted a dark patch on top of the mountain. They later came back to land on the mountain and found that it was a ship buried in ice. All the dimensions given to Noah by God in building the ark agreed with that of the ship in the ice. The wood was of gopher as Moses described (Gen.6:14). This was a shocking revelation. Today, the whole world gives kudos to Moses and takes every Bible account serious. Therefore, like Moses we should strive to write without bias so that present and future generations will not act on distorted information.

From all that I have analysed right from the beginning of this piece, readers can now see that some certain individual/s' impression about Umuezike is pathetic, brimming with bigotry. The Okikpe magazine 1974 Volume1 was unfortunately one of the instruments used to show such intentions. It first of all started by giving our ancestor the position of a servant while he was a prince. It has ridiculed Umuezike so much that one will start to take Umuezike to be a group of nomadic Fulanis who just settled in Aku yesterday. Can we imagine how our great grand children will feel if in future somebody writes that we became teachers, doctors, engineers or even professors by serving as cleaners in a public primary school, hospital, industry and a university?

The same has been extended beyond Umuezike: remember; the distortion in the order of the first generation schools in the Catholic Journal of 2000. Again, a popular proverb about the lizards preying on the flying termites attributed to one of our highly regarded scholars. This was the period of crisis in the Aku General Assembly. Mr Stephen Nnadi was quick to ask the very individual to explain the proverb to all Aku. This was not explained till now. Making careless statement is not good to come from one who appears to be scholarly great.

As if using Okikpe magazine was not enough same individual/s has now found a new method of ridiculing Umuezike by saying that it is the only village in Aku that does not have a school. In order to drive this point home, they suggested that Umuezike should use Uwani-Otobo town hall (still under construction) for a school. If actually this suggestion emanated from deep concern for Umuezike's education development, there are several ways of passing the message across without resorting to public insult.

I first experienced this embarrassment (not advice) in 1979 during a symposium organized by Aku Undergraduates' Union to mark the end of the year's summer lesson. Kenneth Ezea stood to correct this wrong conclusion

but was muzzled by the same person propagating the idea. I could remember that Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Idike was the coordinator of the extra mural studies that summer. So Umuezike has become a loafer who should be advised in the open? **‘Onye nwhu ana-edzi ako n’otobo’**

I write here again to correct such wrong idea. I want to bring to the knowledge of all that Umuezike has never been an educationally disadvantaged community in Aku and even in Nigeria. We embraced education with the rest of Aku at the same time as evidenced in the Catholic Journal 2000. The names of some persons from Umuezike appeared in the litany of pioneers of education in Aku. Since then we have been advancing. I challenge any individual to take census.

I do not know when having a primary school in every village has become a major determining factor for child-education. The most important thing is the accessibility of school to pupils no matter which village the school is sited. I do not know what one stands to achieve by associating villages with the location of schools. No free-minded and modern man looks at the issue of school sites in that way. Unbiased, civilized and broad-minded intellectuals are more concerned today with improving on the standard of the already existing ones, which has fallen below the lowest standard. Multiplication of schools is not our immediate problem.

We should rather be advising every government in power to improve the welfare of schools, teachers and pupils/students. We should be warning the government and individuals concerned on the dangers in delaying the salaries of teachers, examination malpractices, cultism and finally, admitting students into universities through back doors just because of money. We should be warning the government on the implication of making illiterates rule over the educated; a situation whereby near-illiterates were made to supervise Principals of Secondary Schools, many of whom with Masters’ degrees. This indeed is very hopeless. I do not think we are all ignorant of these. If any of those near-illiterate supervisors has happened to come from Umuezike, it might have been announced in the air to prove to the world that the prophecy has come true, since the conclusion would be that such near-illiterate was the best Umuezike could produce for lack of a community school.

For good eight years (1999-2007) we all sat, watched and even some of us applauded a government that had no regard for education and intellectualism,

a government that ruled with her instinct instead of her head, a government that threw sound minds over board, made people who were gap in knowledge to take the seats of erudite, allowed mediocre to claim the positions of aristocrats, and finally turned ignorance into admirable quality.

I know that in the 1970s, Central School, Aku was able to accommodate the entire school children from Akibute and parts of Akutara and Ejuona. Now children mainly from Ofienyi and Umuezike attend the school, some individual/s thinks that the same school cannot contain our children unless another one is built exclusively by and for Umuezike. I will like such individual/s to answer the following questions sincerely:

1. Was Egbugwu Primary School, Aku, built by Nua community or the entire people of Aku through the Catholic Missionaries?
2. Was Community Primary School, Aku, built by Obie community or the entire people of Aku through the Anglican Missionaries?

Going by the above evidences, I do not see the reason Umuezike should be insulted for not having another primary school which is exclusively theirs. For none of these schools I mentioned above was built by the community where it is located. They were built by the whole people of Aku as witnessed in the Catholic Journal 2000 page 14 (The 2000 A.D. Jubilee Book, A short History of St. James' Catholic Church, Aku, 1922-1999). I quote: 'there were healthy competitions among the thirteen villages in Aku to raise funds for building the new church house. The villages: Use, Amabokwu, Mgboko, Umuezike, Ohemuje, Ofienyi, Nua, Obie, Amogwu, Ugwunani, Oshigo, Ugwuegede and Oda would each strive to be the highest contributor of funds. Church services and the school at Agbase were shifted to it (Egbugwu) with effect from 5th of September 1939'.

I thank God that it is owed up that Umuezike did not only participate but competed among other twelve villages to be the highest fund raiser in building a church with a school as far back as in the 1930s. Which means Umuezike knew from the very first day the importance of Christianity and Education. Again, Umuezike is free-minded to have supported a project outside her soil, which many of us find it difficult to do even till today.

I am afraid very soon the same individual/s will like St. James Catholic Church and the Presbytery built by the entire people of Aku to turn to be St. James Catholic Church, Nua, and he will turn around to insult Umuezike for not building a church and a presbytery. Likewise Boys' Secondary School, Aku

will turn also to be Boys' Secondary School, Nua and Umuezike will be derided for not having a boys' secondary school. The same individual/s will wish that the pipe-borne water project funded by the entire Aku community during the time of Edoga and Amadi suddenly becomes a sole property of the section where it was sunk, so that Umuezike will be insulted for not having pipe-borne water. And then it will be delightfully put down that Nua, Oshigo and Amogwu had pipe-borne water and bore holes in 1965, 1983 and 2008 respectively. It will be surprising if the years are not backdated. Then those boreholes in Amankpo, Amabokwu and Uwani-Otobo will appear in the chronicle very much later. Whether the projects came as a result of the effort of the entire Aku community or government but not the village where they are sited may not matter to the writer.

The same scribe/s will be eager to follow it up that parishes existed first in Akutara before any in Akibute. Even a child knows that the next parish after St. James is St. Gregory Pro-Cathedral if things are still followed in order. That was why the entire Aku joined hands in building it.

Recently our image has been battered just because we asked for a written agreement before giving (not selling) any portion of our land at Eke Aku for building the community bank. It is only in Aku and when it concerns Umuezike that it becomes a crime for a landlord to ask for a certain conditions to be met before giving his land out to a businessman. Very soon we shall know whether the owner/s of the piece of land at Obie where the permanent site is located gave it freely. What baffles me is the way the so-called representatives of the Community Bank told lies against a people like Umuezike. They think they have smeared us with mud by presenting us as enemies of progress before the people of Aku. Time will tell.

I shall not conclude without giving special thanks to the following persons in Aku. They are Hon. Gilbert Ugwu; a giant with large heart and broad mind that could not be dwarfed by sectionalism and dichotomy which some individuals still practise in Aku today. 'Over-all', was a name given to him because of his non discriminatory attitude towards all. Even my friend, Mr Francis Odiari from Onicha benefited from Gilbert's free mind. Professor Ogbonna Alaku and Rev. Dr Emmanuel Idike should not be forgotten also for their roles in the advancement of Aku man. These three gentlemen mentioned above are exactly the 1940s and 1960s generations' equivalent of Hon. Bernard Edoga and Captain Cletus Ogbonna Ugbor.

In summary, Umuezike people were among the very early settlers in this Geographical location called Aku. They were involved in the making of laws of the land. They were involved in evolving the cultures. For example, Umuezike, Ugwuegede and Use are the only villages in Aku that were wholly represented in Oha Aku. Umuezike and Use are the only villages that fully participate in Ejegu Oshigo, the most glamorous Aho day throughout the Odo masquerade year. Umuezike is the only village in Aku that sees Ovuru-Uzo Odo masquerade face to face first before any village or person including Nua as a whole. At the time he will come out from his groove, Umuezike will be seated at Otobo Lelegu in front of Odo Nwatta's house facing the entrance to the groove. He comes out being followed by very few men who will never allow him to see them. Face to face with Umuezike he will throw his right foot forward three times in honour of Umuezike. Then Umuezike will burst into songs of joy-----Umu-o, Umuezike, ahumam, ahumam Odo. He will then turn to his left hand side and takes the gully path down to Otobo Uhu in Umundikwu. Umuezike will go down to the same venue via Enu Orié Uwenu. Again Umuezike community occupies the most centrally location in the geography of Aku.

Finally, I want to remind all that the land on which St. Gregory's Pro-Cathedral/school situates belongs to Umuezike. This is well known but some individuals like to express their phobia for a people set on an enviable location in Aku by God (Acts 17:26). So Umuezike does not as of now need a second primary school, the Central School and even the Girls' Secondary School, are in Umuezike. We can ask for more schools if that is the only way the government will compensate us for offering our land for the Eke Aku market and Motor Park.

Chapter Ten

Umuezike and her achievements

Aku, Ezike Attah and Diewa were all Igala. Ezike Attah the father of Umuezike specifically came from Idah. The name 'Ezike' (powerful king) was given to him by the Igbo, signifying a king of great influence. He might have come to Aku before or around 8th century. He was one of the early settlers hence he was able to occupy the most centrally located part of the town.

Umuezike is a large village made up of five hamlets: Uwenu Ezike Orogwo, Umuobara, Amadiefioha, Uwani-Otobo and Amankpo. Each hamlet has a head (Onyishi). The five hamlets were full members of Oha during the Oha system of government in Aku. Other villages in Aku that had all her hamlets represented in Oha are Use and Ugwuegede. The remaining ten villages never had all her hamlets as members of Oha. Use and Umuezike are also the only villages in Aku that have all her hamlets celebrate 'Ejegu Oshigo,' the most glamorous Aho Odo day in Aku. No individual, group or village sees Ovuru-uzo Odo masquerade face to face first except Umuezike.

Umuezike is the only village in Aku that first rejected Chief Ugwu Manu Idikwuogu's style of leadership. The people fought and got their own chief in the person of Chief Ugwu Ishihe.

'Ezike' became a popular name in Umuezike since the time of our ancestor. We have Ezike Orogwo, Ezike Erim, Ezike Ngwoke, Ezike Aroke, Ezike Amoke and others. 'Ezikoro' appears in Amankpo and Uwani-Otobo. Ezikoro was the first son of Erim. He became the godfather of Ezikoro Ajogwu the first son of Ajogwu Anugwu. He was also the godfather of Ezikoro Ogbo, the father of Umuezikoro Ogbo in Amankpo.

Umuezike, like any other village in Aku lives within the same location. One hamlet blends into another. There is no clear boundary between one hamlet and the next. For example Amankpo, Umuobara, Uwenu Ezike Orogwo, and Uwani-Otobo are mixed up at the northern part of Umuezike. At the south Umuobara, Uwani-Otobo, Uwenu Ezike Orogwo and Amadiefioha live together. Uwani-Otobo out of the five hamlets is the only one that people outside Umuezike find difficult to determine her location. This is because the inhabitants live in two different areas. Those living at Ngodongo bordering with Mgboko village are mistaken by the rest of Aku as Amani Mgboko. The remaining part at the south is thought to be Amadiefioha because of the closeness.

Again outsiders mistake Amankpo to be a village completely different from Umuezike. They never knew that Amankpo is a hamlet in Umuezike as Lelegu is to Nua.

It is good to observe that the ancient Umuezike were more courageous, bold, determined and united than the present day Umuezike. The Umuezike of 1922 who fought and got their own Warrant Chief for example were more united than today's Umuezike. It was just as the Biafrans of 1967 were stronger than any group today who may claim to be Biafrans. The ancient Egyptians who built the Great Pyramid had their ingenuity surpassed that of the present day Egyptians. The early people on earth who built the Tower of Babel wanting it to reach heaven were more united than any family, tribe or race on earth today. The B.O.M Edoga led elite of 1940s and '50s were full of visions than some visionless academics we have in Aku today. Likewise Captain Ugbor Nwani's great concern for the advancement of every Aku man was more laudable than many of our highly regarded scholars today who are only interested in the welfare of their nuclear families.

Umuezike village has been having great orators from the beginning of her existence. For example we had Omaga Nwokpe, Ezeado Ishihe, Udeze Nwobodoagu, Nwadi Ochieka, Okara Nwona, Edoga Didigwu, and Agu Diarua. These were extra ordinary wise men of their own times. There were others but for space I could not write their names. The same way we had from the rest of Aku Mgboigwe Nwigwurube from Umudimotfue, Ozo Nwugwu Oketa from Amegu Uwani Ohemuje, Obeta Nwokwuruoka from Onyagbada, Emerek' Ozukeru Ogida (alias Oyi m n' Nwanene) from Umuohagwu, Isaiah Nwofie from Amaezi, Ntfude Ugboihe from Umuneri, Nwodo Nwogbonne from Ezi Oshigo and the rest.

In 1964 Umuezike Co-operative Society was formed under the auspices of Emmanuel Ezeamagu. It was the first of its kind in Aku.

In farming, the following people have excelled: Ezeagu Attah, Ochieka Nwodeke (Ekvue Ochiagha), all from Uwani-Otobo. Others were Ozoja Nwenete and Amukworu Ezeamagu from Amadiefioha and Amankpo respectively.

In commerce, we have Igwe Clement Ezike (Honesty is the best policy), an astute motor transporter, and the most successful in that business in the entire Nsukka zone between 1970 and 2000. Others are Ifeanyi Ekwueme, a

philanthropist from Amadiefioha, Goddy Nwani, a sharp businessman from Amankpo, and the youngest of all, Jude Onyema Amadi (alias Onwa), a motor transporter from Amankpo.

In peace-making, we had Ugod'mbala Ivu-Aku Dugwu from Umuobara. Though he was physically endowed with strength that he could beat up five strong men at a time like the Biblical Samson, he never attended any meeting that ended in chaos. He was called 'Ome terere', meaning someone who always does fine.

We have the following as the men of valour:

Udeji Ugwuoke of distant past
 Ntfude Agwoeke
 Ivuaku Dugwu
 Amadi Nwekwom
 Fredrick (Drick) Odo Nwagwoeke
 Dennis Nwani
 Captain Anthony Attah (Anthony Nwa Johnson)
 Emma Ekwueme
 Paulinus Nwodo
 Ugwu Agadaenyi Nwodo
 Ghana Anibueze Ishihe
 Ogbonna Nwozor
 Ben Nwozor (Toru Udo)
 Joseph Ochieka
 Kenneth Dugwu, etcetera.

Umuezike has done also very well in the area of Education. We had Johnson Nwattah, Matthew Ishihe, Izdore Nwodeke and a host of others as the pioneers of Education. We have renowned teachers like Joseph Okpe, Fidelis Onenyi, Emmanuel Ezeamagu, Clement Isife, Boniface Didigwu, Chris Attah and last but not the least, Cletus Ekwueme Isife, a man who laid solid foundation for my academic pursuit. Today, Umuezike has many graduates in different fields of studies and a professor.

Umuezike produced the first graduate in the entire Aku Ward Three called Ihenkwu Enu in Igbo-Etiti Local Government Area of Enugu State. Umuezike produced also the first medical doctor, lawyer, architect and other professionals from that ward that has the largest population in Aku town and the entire Igbo-Etiti Local Government Area.

In philosophy, we had Nnadi Ogo Nwugwu from Uwani-Otobo. There had been nobody like him in Aku in knowledge and wisdom. Like King Solomon, he made several proverbs that are used in Aku today. Being his kinsman my own father, Ani Nwokoro learnt so much from him.

Some Instances Where the Wisdom of our people manifested; the Wisdom of Ani Nwokoro

There are three incidents that took place in Uwani-Otobo which made his wisdom to come to limelight:

A burglary incident

One day in the early 1960s, a thief broke into the barn of one of the farmers at Ugwunimbo Uwani-Otobo farm settlement and made away with a good number of tubers of yam. A young man was immediately suspected but he denied it all. His relations threatened to bury him alive if he failed to tell them the truth. He remained wall-like. The threat did not shake him.

Meanwhile the whole farmers have chosen a day when everybody would swear before an idol. The relations of this young man knew what it meant to swear falsely. So they approached Ani Nwokoro and begged him to interrogate their brother.

The sleuth who never received any formal education took up the challenge. He warned the people never to talk about the matter to the hearing of the young man again. The detective begged the suspect to help him mend his roof during one of the great feasts coming up at home then. He accepted to assist the psychologist.

When the day came they set out to work very early. Before late in the afternoon the duo had finished the roof mending. Sumptuous meal was served and later a special grade of palmwine from Ugwu Izuogu, a professional tapper from Amabokwu. After each had taken a cup of the wine, the detective started telling the suspect about the history of Uwani-Otobo as fearless, courageous, truthful and honest people. In addition the farm settlement exclusively belongs to Uwani-Otobo. And he (the sleuth) was a member of the farm council. The council was in charge of taking major decisions in the farm. He would not sit down and watch others crucify him. As a Prince (the young man) he should not develop nervousness (Nwamu anug' adfu odfu egbu) because of mere taking away of some tubers of yam; a meagre quantity which

he (the detective) could cheaply pay back to the owner. Looking at the young man directly into the eyes, the detective said that he knew he (the suspect) was the person who stole the yam from their kinsman's barn.

The thief immediately nodded in affirmation. The sleuth insisted that the thief should open his mouth to answer him not nodding. To this the thief answered 'yes'. The detective hugged and praised him for his courage to say the truth. They continued drinking and discussing other issues till darkness fell.

Hardly did he leave before his relations rushed to the detective to get the result. They all wept bitterly and disappointedly when they heard that their brother was the thief. The swearing did not take place again.

Disarming a lunatic

Another area which Ani Nwokoro showed his psychological shrewdness was his ability to disarm a raging lunatic.

In the late 1950s a man from Uwani-Otobo was struck with severe madness. He was fettered and fastened to a pillar. A particular age group was appointed by the entire hamlet to keep him under surveillance. The detective fell into this age. Their members took turn in keeping watch over the lunatic. In one of the detective's turns something unbelievable happened.

The lunatic begged the sleuth to unfasten the chains and unfetter his hands so that he could be relieved of the pains at least for that moment. This was a very difficult request to be granted. The psychologist knew the implication. He would be held responsible if he acceded to the demand and the lunatic eventually turned violent. He refused.

The mad man went on to tell him that of all the men who had been coming as guards, he was the only person who would sit down very close to him and discussed issues with him as if nothing was wrong with him. He would even go on to loosen the tight grip of the chains and fetter. Others would rather tighten the grip whenever he cried of pains. They would stand far off ready to use their clubs on him if he should shake. He swore to the sleuth that God in heaven would not allow him to put such a kind person in trouble by running away or turning violent.

This comment deeply touched the detective. He took the risk. The wife of the lunatic was surprised to see her husband freed and was chatting heartily with the sleuth when she brought his supper. After meal the two men talked on several issues concerning Uwani-Otobo and the wider societies. From that day the man started improving courtesy of the astute psychologist.

His Unshaken Character

The same man was confronted by the entire community of Ugwunimbo Uwani-Otobo farmers on betraying one of them. He was accused by one chief Ezeagu Attah of betraying him. It will be misleading to hear Ugwunimbo Uwani-Otobo and conclude that it is only Uwani-Otobo people that are residing in that farm settlement. Between 1940 and 1990, the farm settlement was booming with large population made up of Uwani-Otobo, Uwenu Ezike Orogwo, Umuobara, and Uwenu Orinogwu in Amadiefioha. Relations of these above mentioned hamlets which cut across the entire Aku were also included. So it was an enormous population made up of men who were respected, women and children.

Among these people who were from other parts of Aku was Ezike Ominyi. He was from Amoze Ugwunani. He came to live in Uwani-Otobo when he was a lad. He lived with his mother who was remarried to Uwani-Otobo. He was an orator. He was a bosom friend of Ani Nwokoro.

It happened that one day Ani Nwokoro went to Ezeagu Attah's house to collect a grinding stone for his tobacco. It coincided with the time Ezeagu Attah was complaining to people around him that it was a misnomer to have Ezike Ominyi (a non indigen) chairman the farm settlers. Before he knew it, it was revealed to Ezike Ominyi including the one he did not say. Ezike Ominyi immediately reacted by threatening to sue Ezeagu Attah for deformation of character. Ezeagu Attah concluded that it must be Ezike Ominyi's bosom friend, Ani Nwokoro who leaked the information. Of course, there was no other person to suspect. When confronted, he said he was not. Nobody believed him considering his closeness with his friend. His kinsmen, brother and relations never believed him.

Ezeagu Attah threatened to acquire a dangerous idol and carry it around to kill the person who had betrayed him. This threat shook Ani Nwokoro's relations

to the point that his second cousin, Ezike Nwugwu from Ofienyi came and wept before him, pleading that he should own up to the accusation. He laughed and told his cousin in a firm but polite manner that he was not the traitor. After several pressures from all quarters could not yield the expected result, Ezeagu Attah finally carried out his threat. He got one of the most dangerous idols that can exterminate an entire family if sworn falsely.

At the first call-----gbue ooo! An unexpected happened. A voice came objecting that it should not kill. Behold, it was Ugwuja Dinwoke from Uwenu Ezike Orogwo. All were surprised. He said it was his kinsman (name withheld) who was the traitor. The name and sight of the idol made him tremble as he explained how it happened.

Ezeagu Attah immediately rushed to Ani Nwokoro asking for forgiveness.

Again Ani Nwokoro became very much admired for his wisdom and strong will. His bosom friend, Ezike Ominyi though surprised that his friend could keep such information from him, yet his regard for his friend increased. As an orator he knew the implication of being involved in gossip.

Note: The names of the thief, the mad man and the betrayer are withheld to avoid embarrassing their relations or descendants.

God has blessed us in all ramifications. First he made us kings and princes for the fact that our ancestor can be traced to a royal family in Idah. We occupy the most centrally and enviable location in the Geography of Aku and so on. Therefore we owe Him a debt to serve Him in spirit and in truth, Amen.

ILLUSTRATIONS



ALHAJI ALIYU OBAFE,
one of the modern Attahs of Igala.
He reigned from 1956 - 2012



Odo Igbonekwu from Umudimotfue, Mgboko holding the giant bell (Oti) believed to have been brought from Igala by Ezike Attah. Note: this may not be the original one.



fortress (Ekpe Igara) at Ugwu Ujere corner of the nineteenth century.

Igala Fortress (Ekpe Igara) at Ujere hill constructed around seventeenth century



Ezike Ukpocha's barn (oba Nwukpocha), now a sacred bush. It is behind Augustine Ugwu's house.



Erim as represented in Okikpe Odo masquerade



One of Umuerim from Amankpo as represented by Ayi
Odo masquerade

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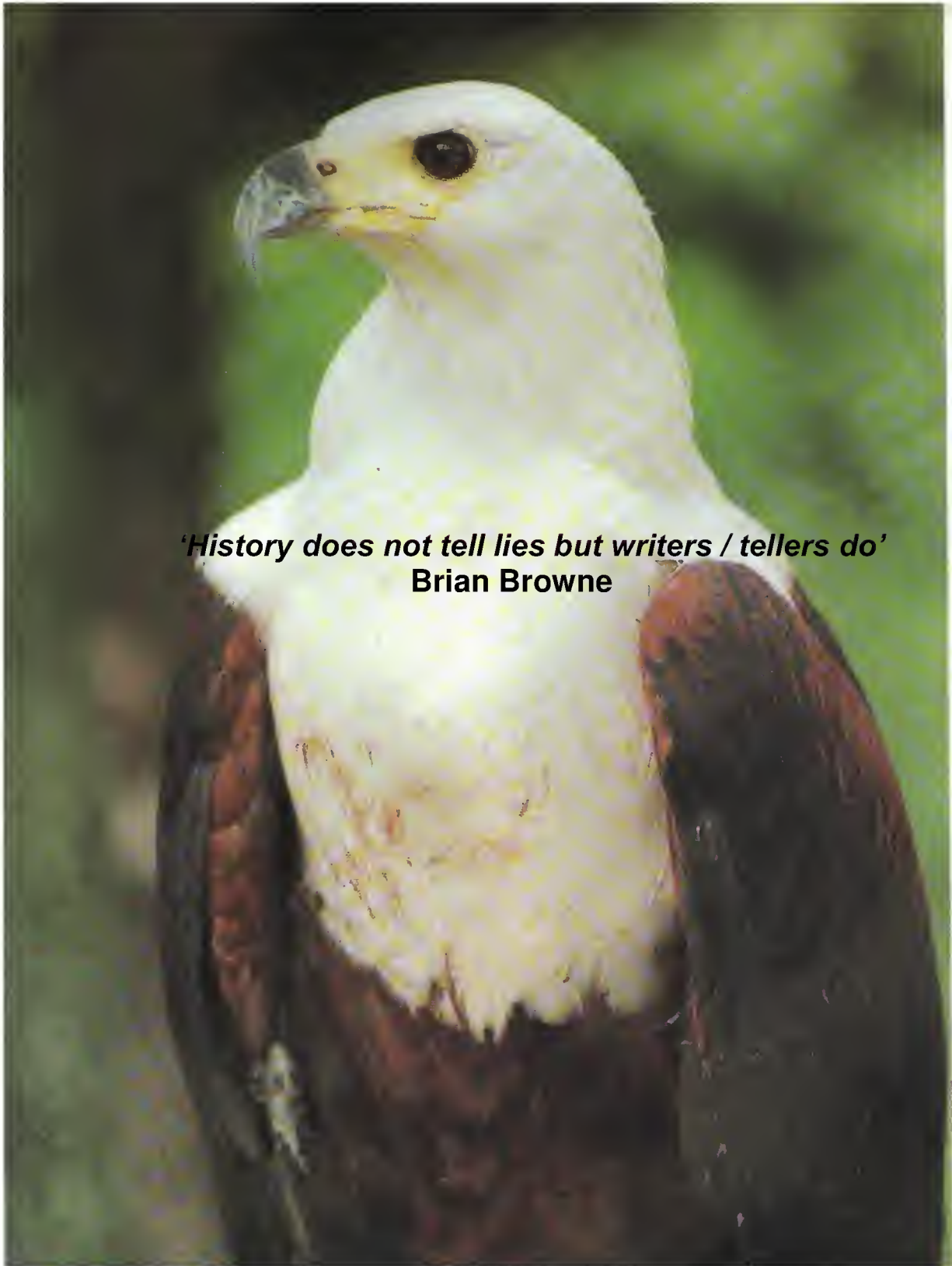
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'History does not tell lies but writers / tellers do'
Brian Browne